

The Persecution of STEPHEN STRONG

Rev. C. E. Babcock, Ph.D.

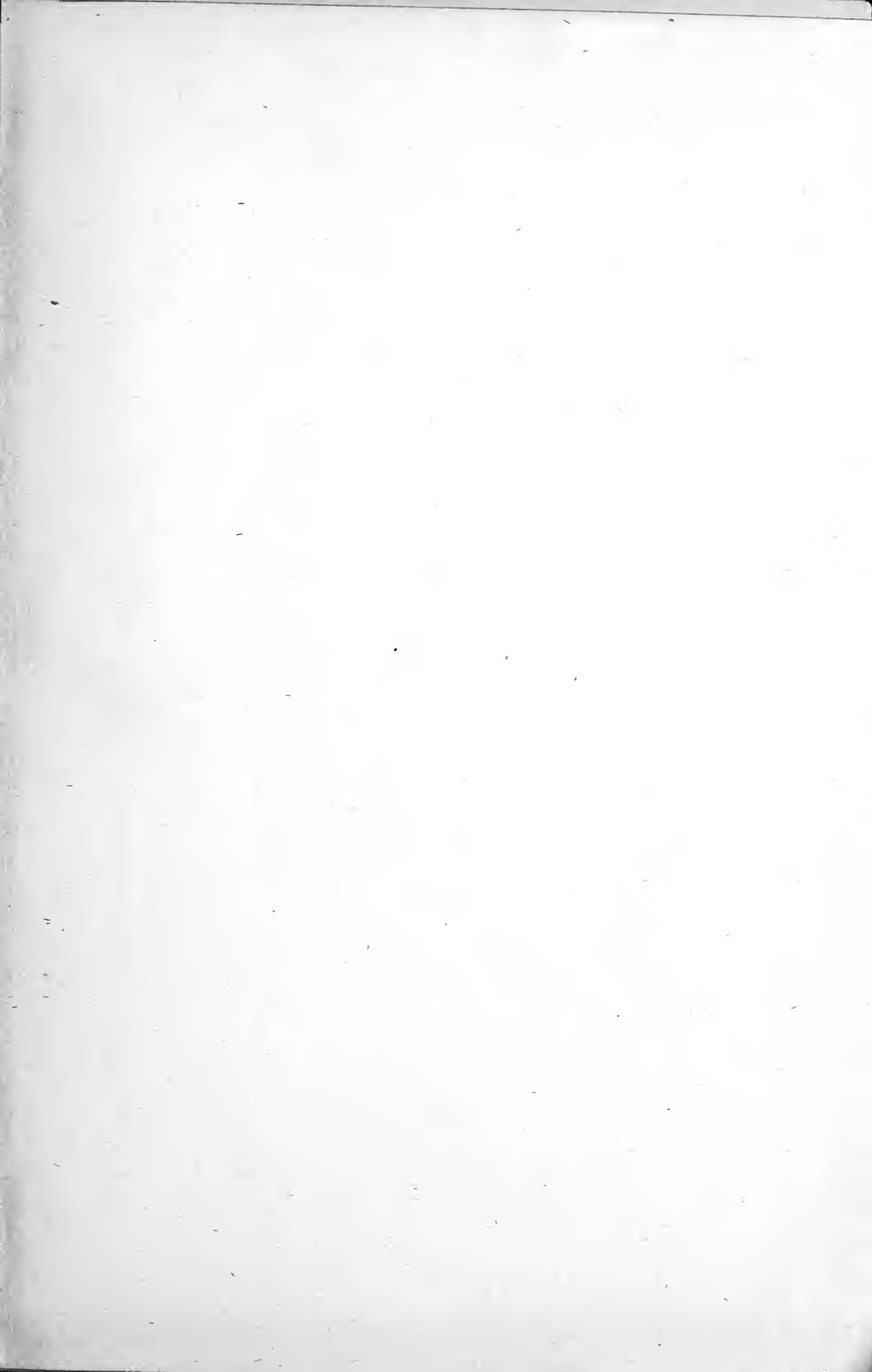


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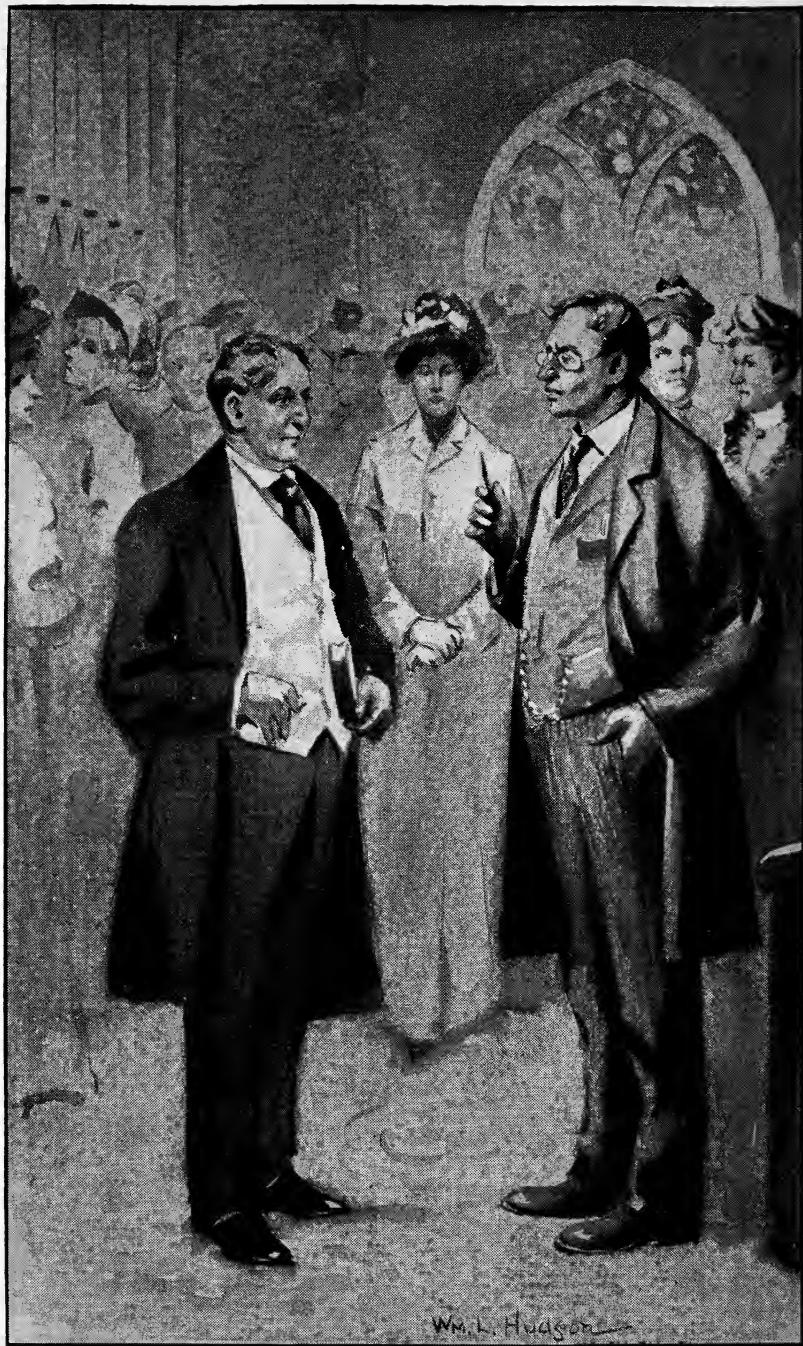
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W.M. L. Hudson

"THEY HAVE BEEN MADE TO FEEL THAT THEIR WISHES ARE DOMINANT, UNTIL THEY HAVE COME TO THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF OWNERSHIP."—*Introduction, 2d page, line 14.*

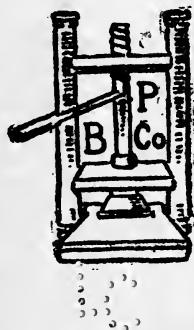
"THEIR MANNER WAS, THEY OWNED IT ALL."—*4th letter, 48th page, 12th line.*

(Frontis. Stephen Strong.)

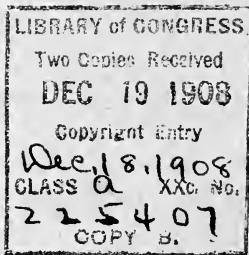
The Persecution of Stephen Strong

...By...

Rev. C. E. BABCOCK, Ph.D.



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BY

REV. C. E. BABCOCK

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INTRODUCTION.

The secular and religious press of to-day is filled with bold criticisms on the Church, in which it is unhesitatingly stated that the Church has lost its power; that religious affairs are fast being relegated to the background. A few years ago G. Campbell Morgan retired from America to his native England, declaring that the true spirit of religion was wanting in America. The religious press in commenting upon his words tried to explain their meaning so that his heroic truth might not have so keen an edge to cut its way, yet to this day it stands substantiated and the unwelcome truth sits at our firesides, stands in our pulpits, and occupies our pews. That which was preached and accepted a quarter of a century ago as to the dividing line between the church and the world is now quite generally ignored, and that which was declared to be unchristian and worldly is now quite generally accepted by the church-

going public. The test of church prosperity seems to be based upon large congregations and plenty of money to foot the bills. Hence there arises the question, who shall occupy the pulpits? Or, perhaps, it is better stated to say that the superficial public must be consulted and must dictate not only who the preacher shall be, but what the preaching shall be, and while they are about it, they do not fail to fix the length of the sermon and woe be to the preacher who dares to add five minutes "to his stature" beyond their specified limit. Their method of reasoning seems proper for them, since they have been made to feel that their wishes are dominant until they have come to the consciousness of ownership. And are they not justified in this, since, if their feelings are not consulted they will be conspicuous by their absence and ministers and deacons will be left with the problem of empty pews to solve. They have forgotten that the church is a divine institution and that the true minister is divinely called. Think of Moses consulting the people as to whether they would accept the ten commandments, or still worse asking them to dictate the subject matter or how long they should

be. True, the people had much to do with the commandments, for their unfaithfulness caused him to cast down the tables of stone in the utter discouragement of the Law Giver when he saw the golden calf. But whoever heard that that congregation was consulted as to who the next preacher should be. I know there are notable exceptions to this rule in the churches to-day, but quite generally it is to be observed that the golden calf has come in, and 'come to stay. Fine churches, well dressed preachers and congregations, and in many instances well filled houses, seem to be conclusive evidence that the Lord has suddenly come to his temple and claimed his own right in his own sanctuary. But even a superficial observer may see that he has not thus come. Neither is it Biblical that we should look for him in that way. God's spiritual bestowments follow fixed laws just as truly as do the laws of electricity and the courses of the wind. We seem to have forgotten that the great future is an unknown sea before us. The past we know, the future—who can tell? In this future lies the destiny of the world. Now what is our conception of the church of Jesus

Christ? Is it not the ark in which we are to navigate these unknown waters? And who knows what these are to be only God? Hence, what church committee, minister or congregation dares to assume to direct until they have been into the secret chamber with God, found out his direction, and forsaking self and selfish ways waited in His presence until they are endued with power from on high? Had this been the directing power in the past, results would be far different from what they are to-day. Nay, the worldly and the unconsecrated portion of the outward church have made bold to come in and dictate and control, until the church has become a great social club; "standing in the holy place, where it ought not to stand, let him that readeth understand," excluding them who would work, themselves having no true conception of what the work should be. Nor do they stop at broken hearts who pine away and die over the desolations that are wrought in Zion. Having publicly committed themselves to gross errors, they set up their banners in the name of the church and in the face of a public which knows their wickedness, they lead on, crying, "Come with us

and we will do you good." Now every sensible person knows that it is not in their power to do good under these conditions, and for them to push on in such an attempt is but to involve the whole in difficulties and render it absolutely impossible to make any true progress. And the startling thing about this entire matter is, that these usurpers of power and privilege in their so-called march of progress look back upon their silenced and excluded victims charging them with having fallen from God, when in reality the ones they malign are not only the hope of the church but the salt of the earth. How long does it take us to learn that things are not always what they seem, and again, "it is not all gold that glitters." It is a sad comment upon church conditions to-day that an untold amount of wrong is covered in until the masses in the communities look upon it all with mistrust. Leading ministers, and in the main good men, look upon these wrongs and cry, SILENCE—SILENCE—SILENCE or we may do the cause of God incalculable harm. And then quote the scripture, "I will keep my mouth as with a bridle while the wicked is before me." The injured parties are

labored with by those who are witnesses of the conditions and express sorrow that an outraged heart has had the courage to divulge these doings to the public ear since it tends to make men skeptical towards religious teachings. It reminds one of the colored preacher in the times of slavery. Thefts were common among them and the master suggested to the preacher that he discourse upon the sin of stealing. The preacher replied, "It would not do, massa, it would bring a coldness over de meetin'." In regard to present day religion, we say a thousand times rather let the coldness come than to attempt to go forward on the supposition that an apparent ignorance of wrong in the church excuses the wickedness and leaves an open way for the advancement of true piety in the earth. Do not for a moment think that we are here arguing that God has abandoned the earth, or that he could not make mighty strides of advance through his chosen church. The great heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind and is most surely touched with the feelings of our infirmities. But what could he do with Judas, though loaded down with silver, the most weighty on earth, as it was the

price of the Master. Where in God's church is room for the betrayer? Where could Judas go but to go out and hang himself? "It were better for that man had he never been born." Said a layman to a pastor, "I don't care what you do, but you must fill the church." The filling of churches is all right, the desirability of large congregations is all right, but let them be brought together by holy men and women whose hearts are moved by the Holy Ghost. But how is it, that, throughout the land more pews are empty than are occupied? Is it because we are living in a skeptical age? I think not. Men believe in God, the Bible, Eternal realities; they believe in a preparedness for the great realities that are to come. They look into the churches and in too many instances men that are bad, positively bad, are in the lead. They are guilty of public wrongs and injustices and yet they invite you to their places of worship and would kneel down by your side and in mockery would pray God that you may be saved, even as they are. We sincerely ask what these prayers do to help an honest soul pleading to be freed from sin? But this is not all. With this evident miscon-

ception on the part of the leaders, the general thought has come to be taught that church attendance and good intentions will fit one for the heavenly world. Thinking men sit down at home and ponder these things. Multitudes, on the whole, conclude to take their chances as compared with those who hypocritically make long prayers. On the first proposition they are right, the second does not follow. They need not make their preparation for Eternity in church companionship, but they must become contrite and meekly bow the heart to the Divine Being who alone can forgive sin. What a glorious thing it would be if all buyers and sellers were cast out of God's temple. But if they will persist in their leadership, we must march under the banner, more of God and less of Ecclesiasticism, more of the inward and less of the outward. The correcting of local churches and erring individuals is a serious problem. The present condition is piling undeserved wrongs on many a silent sufferer, and men who should be Goliaths in strength are made weak because the spirit of oppression has barred them out and even locked the church doors against them. It is time some

one rose up to plead the cause of the needy, or rather it is time some one should so clearly enunciate the needs of the present hour that there may be a general uprising in favor of God and the religion of the Cross. The question arises how far the experiences of one individual in any given community are applicable to the general public? Can the cause of religion, justice and righteousness in general be promoted by a pointed exposure of wrong doing on the part of the membership of any one church whose time and effort should have been spent in better things? The writer of these pages is of the opinion that God has been leading him in ways which if rightly explained will help to roll back the stone which seems now impossible to remove from the grave of hope. Harrowing experiences from which he has shrunk but could not escape, great wrongs, persecutions and insults exposed, may put honest men and women on their guard and make them cautious to tread upon ground upon which angels would hesitate to enter. Also it will show the evil designer that there is an avenue of defense to the apparently helpless one. An aroused public opinion will rise up and demand

that at least in the church, honesty and fair play shall hold sway. There must be room for devout souls to work for God and when these heaven endowed rights are interfered with, some one must be wrong. We have chosen to make these revelations in the Epistolatory form as being a style which comes nearest the heart, and in its own spirit makes its own pleadings as the story advances. In the hope that God will use this effort to His own glory in pulling down the strongholds of sin and Satan, it is put in your hands to read and decide. But as you decide, be sure to place your decision upon the basis of equity and righteousness. The following pages will show that the writer was assailed by an ignorant unconsecrated people who seemed to be entirely incapable of appreciating merit or of opening their eyes to the fact that as a local church they were in the midst of exceptional prosperity, due to the untiring and successful efforts of a consecrated minister and his wife. It will be seen that they entirely ignore earned honors, and esteem it a light thing to strip the indefatigable pastor and his wife, of all honors which they had so clearly won. If churches

can't be honest with ministers, and if ministers can't be honest with churches, then let us abandon the whole plan and look for something better to take its place. It is an outrage on public decency to fall in with the general remark, that the minister who builds the church cannot stay with it. This pit is prepared as the grave for the choicest and best that is in the church at the present time. Everybody knows that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and we know, too, that sensible men are not going to submit to such an unrighteous principle. This position will not stand the test of common business. It will be branded as unjust and iniquitous. If so in business, how much more in the church? As these instances increase, the general disgust of the public increases? Nor does it avail to call an outraged public skeptical and unbelieving. It is the so-called church that is skeptical and unbelieving. Neither does it avail that unworthy ministers rise up to take the part of the erring and sinful leaders. There can be but one end to all such conduct. Hand in hand they are advancing to the day when they and all the world shall see that the wrath of God is out against them.

Who then shall give the warning cry? The writer of these pages would say in answer to this question, "Here am I, Lord, send me." "If the watchman see the sword coming and raise not his voice, the sword shall fall, but their blood shall be required at his hands." Let all parties read and ponder, but remember you are warned, there are breakers ahead. These letters are addressed to my sainted Mother, as in the presence of her memory there will be no temptation to express other than the ungarnished truth. And, as I hope to meet her in the by-and-by, let sincerity guide my pen in these startling revelations. Let it be understood that these letters are written to my Mother and in this light they are to be read. Otherwise, there will be times when the reader will call the writer egotistic. But when you realize that we tell Mother all, you will permit the writer to lean on her neck and sob out his griefs.

The Persecution of Stephen Strong

FIRST LETTER.

To My Sainted Mother in Heaven:

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

It is several years since I took my pen to write to you. I remember a sad Sabbath evening in September, 1881, that a telegram reached me telling me that you were dead. It was just a few months before that, that I gave you the last good-bye and you drew me to your pillow, saying, "I suppose God wants you more than I do, but that is a good deal." It was just before the evening preaching, and that night as I told the people of the things of God, it seemed as though Heaven and earth were very near together. I made the lonely journey to the old home and saw you like a silent watcher about to enter the tomb. Father, children and grand-children turned quietly away and each again took up the thread of life as best we

could. Since then, father, sisters and brothers have all followed you, and I am left alone to make out the remaining portion of my days. I have often wondered if you saw me in my labors, and, to tell you the truth, I have been lonesome for your prayers. You will bear me record, that in the early days of my ministry I was very sincere, and gladly gave up worldly opportunities that I might join in the good fight and win souls to Christ. You will remember, too, how often you were cheered to learn that God was using me in this particular. You also lived to know and see, that God gave me as true and capable a wife as any minister of the Gospel need have. I need not tell you to-day that she has been true and faithful to me and stands out a true light for God with the full courage of her conviction. I mention this because in the letters I address to you, you will have occasion to test her true spirit and see that earth does still possess some who dare to speak for truth and righteousness, even in the midst of trials and persecutions. It fell to our lot to have several pastorates. On many fields signal success marked our efforts. We were not vainglorious, neither were we satisfied to

reap alone what other men had sown. We had sickness, disappointments and troubles, but we bore them as best we could and daily looked for Divine guidance. One thing, however, was a source of constant sorrow to us. We could but see that designing men and women both in the ministry and out of it were unscrupulous in their plans to bring about their own selfish ends. We seemed to look in vain for the beautiful spirit of humility, where each esteemed others better than himself, and in honor preferred one another. We knew that nothing less than this would do in the church of Jesus Christ. Without it we are all of the earth earthy, we are shorn of our strength and are become even weaker than other men. We watched with sorrow the criticisms the outside public were making upon the church. But we gave ourselves to the defense of the church, and refused to see only the faith that was once delivered to the saints. We covered the acts of the church with a cloak of charity, and made apologies for what we esteemed to be more an error of judgment, than a deliberate purpose of the heart to depart from the things of God. We began to hear about liberal Christianity,

and inquired what it meant. Leading ministers in prominent Orthodox pulpits were ready to declare it unto us. They told us that God did not mean what he said when he declared that the wicked shall be turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God. They even let down the standard of moral living and sustained those who departed from the principles of temperance and righteousness. And in many instances we were obliged to look on and see such men the honored leaders of God's hosts. You will readily see how hard this was to bear, and then to see others who in their faith were clear in utterance, with their lips they drew near to God, but in their hearts were far from Him. But for all this, a degree of prosperity attended our efforts and we had scarcely a charge that did not see souls born into the kingdom. Appreciative ones were not wanting to give us the hearty God bless you, and we felt we were repairing the waste places of Zion. We spurned the idea that anybody could be found in the ministry, having any degree of apparent success who would admit the truth of any of these points of criticism. But time and again we could not avoid seeing them with

open eyes. At least we were pained to see that public opinion did not doubt the justness of these attacks, but at the same time would set about making apologies for them, as though they were a chronic disease, that could not be cured, and must therefore be endured. Such newspaper clippings as the following were frequently found:

“TOO MUCH TRUTH.”

“A preacher came to a newspaper man in this way. ‘You editors do not tell the truth. If you did you could not live; your newspapers would be a failure.’ The editor replied, ‘You are right, and the minister who will at all times under all circumstances tell the whole truth about his members, dead or alive, will not occupy his pulpit more than one Sunday, and then he will find it necessary to leave town in a hurry. The press and the pulpit go hand in hand with white-wash brushes and pleasant words, magnifying little virtues into big ones.’ The pulpit, the pen and the grave stone are the great saint-making triumvirate! and the great

minister went away looking very thoughtful, while the editor turned to his work."

Now the great question which arises here is, in all fairness for humanity and God, what is the editor's work in the light of such utterances? What is the minister's work? Is it true work on the part of either to ignore the immovability of true righteousness? Are we to be taught that there is any true moral work, that there is any true progress, without advancement in virtue? Still worse, is God dead, or living, will he accept any such teachings as indicative of His purposes in the earth? Here is the pivotal point in the questions which are before the world to-day. Whether time serving ministers and irresponsible editors, in affiliation with a few designing men and women in the churches, and in communities, who constitute themselves a committee of the whole, to manufacture just such social and religious conditions as they please, shall continue to put up whom they will, or what is equally bad put down whom they will? Or, shall base hypocrisy be endured when in apparent endorsement of truth, the ruling is constantly against the one whose whole being is absorbed in sim-

ply propagating the eternal principles of righteousness in Christ Jesus. As to ourselves, Dear Mother, you will see we were not apparently criticised and persecuted for utterance of truth. Not this, but in the midst of unparalleled success, in which we led a discouraged little band to unwonted achievement, in which we, as leaders, were entitled to our full share of the joy and triumph, instead, we were unmercifully attacked, ruthlessly handled, and betrayed by the people we supposed loved us, before an unsuspecting community. And thus with broken hearts and disappointed hopes and closed church doors to make our way as best we could. Where would such treatment be likely to lead us? Because we could not brook such usage, are we to be called infidel and unbelieving? Is heaven closed to us because we cannot follow such ways, persuading ourselves that such leadings are toward heaven? Still more are we justified in allowing such wrongs to go uncorrected, is it right for a deceived public to mistake such a congregation for the true church of Jesus Christ? If God be God, the sword of justice must be raised against all such, and if so, the only course of duty left is

to faithfully warn the erring ones themselves, and warn the unsuspecting public against their further deception. In Ezekiel iii., 18:19, we read, "When I say unto the wicked thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." In the light of such truth I feel compelled to speak, not with the thought of revenge, but with the hope of reform. Moreover, we are living in days when the spirit of reform is in the air, and it does not stop at long practiced evils, or corruptions long since supposed covered. At a business convention one of the speakers said, "However, the spirit of the day is for reform, and the tendency is to call a halt and insist upon the abating of existing wrongs." This speaker said that "The men who are the direct cause of these abuses should be placed where they rightly belong, behind the bars of criminals' cells. The mere possession

of money and power is not happiness, there must be honesty. The accumulation of vast fortunes is looked upon with suspicion in the present day. The dealers must be honest themselves and insist upon honesty in others." Now shall business life go into the work of reform, shall fearless Roosevelt attack dishonesty with ungloved hands, shall the light shine upon all these works that their evils may be exposed, while at the same time the policy of the church shall be to cover up the wrongs of the past, leaving the injured ones to smart and suffer, without one word of correcting utterance? Rather, is it not better to pay some heed to the cry which is so commonly made towards the life of to-day, "If such doings are Christian, I don't want it; if such men are right, I will take my chances." Why not at least stop long enough to inquire into the justness of these complaints and ascertain whether these things are so? If they are not so, let us all see it and defend those who are spoken against, and wherever the criticism is just, let us insist upon retraction, repentance and reform. Without doubt much criticism is undeserved and wrong, but just as sure is it that much is

deserved and it is not fair that the general whole should be smirched and weakened by the intrigues of those whose only aim is to look out for their own selfish ends, and to control in the affairs of church and society. How many others have had experiences like mine I know not, but I am fearful that much of the following wrongs are too common. At least, give me the privilege of declaring myself, and do not compel me to go down to my grave without letting the general public know that I stand for right and that I do not easily submit to have my ministerial robes trampled in the dust, by a company of people, who have no true conception of what the religion of Christ is. "I am weary with holding in." So do not tire, Dear Mother, while I relate to you the mental tortures of months and years and learn that I am forced out upon ground which I never sought. God knows I would gladly have avoided it, but if by any possibility there shall come greater caution and reverence on the part of those who are so ready to control, and if it shall come, that a vindicated public shall see the true position of God's church and shall come into fellowship with God, and into union with those

who have laid aside their evil ways, I can in some sense see why it is that God has led me in such unusual paths. The great truth must stand. GOD IS HOLY, MAN IS UNHOLY, and in his practices has departed from his Maker. But Christ has died, intercession has been made and the one great creed of the Bible is within the reach of all. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." So face to face with God let us not stumble if wicked men still pursue their wicked ways. No organization, or combination, or individual, can stand between the soul and its Creator.

Your affectionate son,

STEPHEN STRONG.

SECOND LETTER.

DEAREST MOTHER:—

Having told you some of the general work in which we have been engaged, you will be prepared to learn about this particular field. Much could be said on the various fields occupied, but here, interests and experiences unite to make this of special importance. Early in the winter of 1894 and 1895, we were called to the Calvary Church in the enterprising village of Thrift. After I had preached three Sabbaths on trial, I was unanimously called to the pastorate of the church. I found the church very much run down in interest, only a few attending its services, and the society having very little influence, in its standing, in the community. We have since learned that in the past history of the church, a bad plague spot was left upon it. Through mismanagement, the society became financially embarrassed and as a result lost the church property, and came near

ending its existence. It was sold under mortgage foreclosure, and what seems strange about it is, that one trustee owning a few hundred dollars refused to put his money out of his hands, and in the transaction all that he had was lost. His wife died of a broken heart and he died in great sorrow because those who composed the church were willing to look on and witness his impoverishment without even suggesting that all should help bear the misfortune. Many of those familiar with the circumstances of those times declare that the curse of God was on the church. And many now say that it was that curse that lies at the bottom of my deep sorrow. But as nearly all parties connected with that experience were either dead, or moved away, we could not see why new people should be obliged to commit great wickedness to keep up the evil record of those who had passed to their account. As it appeared to me at the very beginning of my pastorate, a few poor and socially unrecognized people were making a good fight for existence. A few others were ashamed of the fact that they belonged to the Calvary Church and not unfrequently on that account found homes in

other churches. With fuller light upon the subject we can now see that some chose other church communions just simply from the ill-usage from those who controlled in church affairs. But my thought was, as these wrongs were so long gone by that we could do nothing with them, the right thing to do would be to begin at the present, and do right, and God would overrule so that permanent success would follow. In this I believe I was right, and it would have proved so had it not entered into the hearts of some of the people to betray the cause, and crucify the Son of God afresh. Be that as it may, we set about the great task of rallying the forces and so laboring that we might respect ourselves, and thus obtain the favor of God and the confidence of the people. Immediately upon the beginning of our work when it was learned that Mrs. Strong was a music teacher and an excellent player, she was urged to preside at the organ, and at the first regular church meeting she was elected church organist and so continued to be elected to the very last of our stay in the church. When we first came, union meetings at Grace Church had been planned to be held by Evan-

gelist True. Those meetings proved very beneficial to the churches and the community at large. Two or three hundred joined the other churches, about twenty-five joined the Calvary Church, which, under all the circumstances, seemed a good result for us, even though so far below the ingathering of the other churches. In fact, a good spiritual interest seemed to rest on the church and we enjoyed a good degree of prosperity. Among us was one Deacon Willrule who had come to the town to manufacture a wagon which he had invented. He was the Superintendent of the Sunday School, was church clerk, and seemed ready to hold any office or do any work which might be required. It might be said of him that he was very active, he seemed to be doing all for the good of the cause, yet several, even then, rose up and declared that he was not a good man because he and others had dealt very unfairly and unjustly with Rev. Mr. Knox, my predecessor. They loudly declared that he had used very unfair means to force Mr. Knox to resign. It seems a favorite scheme with this Saint in Israel to bring any pastorate to a conclusion by a process of starvation. The plan

worked on Rev. Mr. Knox and he declared himself "officially starved out." Of course, I did not witness this, as it was done before my coming, and when any such charges were made against him, his present apparent sincerity in the work we laid out, caused us to decide in his favor and to infer that Mr. Knox was a little over sensitive when he thus abruptly resigned. One Deacon Slyman was attending church here when I first came. He gave evidence of being converted in the True meetings and was the first one I baptised. For a time he was faithful in attendance at prayer meetings, and with the others who had joined with the little band who were already here, we seemed to be able to form a league offensive and defensive for the promotion of God's cause, and very soon the hearts of the pastor and wife went into the brotherly fellowship and there was nothing too hard for us if we might see our chosen church prosper. The pastor's wife set about building up the choir, an orchestra of several pieces was obtained, a choir of several voices was obtained so that when four years had gone by it would have been difficult to find better music in any church. All seemed happy, the pastor often

remarking that such music was heavenly. Of course this condition was not reached without many discouragements. Sometimes a male quartet would constitute the choir. At the first the organ and violin was the orchestra, but by careful attention the other changes came. The Sunday School increased from about fifty to two hundred. Good singing was in the Sunday School and at length an orchestra was obtained for that. Everybody seemed interested and everybody could find something to do. In the year 1898, Rev. John Duncan, an evangelist, held meetings in the place and a few united with the church from that effort. Fair congregations greeted the pastor from time to time, but what seemed best, a good fraternal feeling prevailed, and the spirit of good fellowship increased between the churches. It was the pastor's ambition to have the Calvary Church take its proper place side by side with the others. It was gratifying to note from time to time how we grew in favor. As is always the case, we obtained our recognition when we showed we respected ourselves. We were not numerically or financially as strong as the others, but we were accorded equal rank

with them as soon as we showed our purpose to occupy our proper place. In other words, we were helped. Heaven and the people helped us as we helped ourselves. Right here there is one matter which should be mentioned. I do it to show how much harm one man can do. There was one, Sam Spoiler, who was here when I came and very soon after united with the church by letter. He is a peculiar man. Seems to see things twisted, and yet possessed of a very high opinion of himself and his own capabilities. I had all through my life made men a study, so as to know how to handle them. I studied him, made close fellowship with him. I knew his notions were peculiar, but I thought I could manage him and make him available for church work, as in many directions he seemed qualified to do good service. At one time he went into fiery criticism of Deacon Willrule. I labored with him and changed his views to a different idea in the case. I had not the least idea that he had assailed me. But after two or three years learned that he had gone through the adjoining towns reporting that I was not a success, and that soon there must be a change of pastors in

Thrift. To my amazement at one time he worked this leaven to such an extent that it almost seemed that I must leave. I was able to quiet the uprising by telling him to stop slandering me, and to cease going throughout the land uttering untruths about me. By this course I then and there assigned him to his right place and for three or four years he absented himself from the church and we enjoyed a rest from his labors. About this time Mr. and Mrs. S. Turner came to this place from Sand Hill. They loudly proclaimed that they had come on account of their great admiration for me, having previously heard me at their home church. Just then we were contending for proper conduct in the church. One or two talking very bad against Deacons Will-rule and Slyman as the people were going out of the church. Of course this did not tend to increase the congregation. We succeeded in quieting these outbursts, although we have subsequently learned that much that they said was true. Another thing that troubled us was, the practice of a species of snobbery. Poor as the people were, as soon as they began to see signs of prosperity, the older ones, and even

the children, would make it a point to say cutting things about any, old or young, who did not seem to be dressed as good as they fancied themselves to be. Of course they would be sure to say these things where the ones criticised would hear it and cause them to feel that their presence was not desired. Deacon Will-rule said to me, "It is all right to get the poor, but we must make the well-to-do specially welcome." As I discerned these things from time to time, I combatted them. I told children and all, that it was none of their business how people dressed, only so that they were respectable; that it was God's house and the invitation was to all. I believed it then and I believe it now, and never so long as I have breath, will I yield these principles to these usurpers in Zion. Especially were they radical if one should fall into sin. The drunkard had only one place, and that was on the outside of the church. I told them the church was not on trial, it was the people who needed reform and it was the duty of the church to work these reforms, by being kind and gentle and helpful to those who were under the power of any sin. About two years after we came, R. Weak and family,

moved into town. He was an excellent violinist and the chorister persuaded him to bring his violin and help in the music. This was the beginning of a very fine orchestra of ten or twelve pieces. He was a great help to Mrs. Strong in keeping the time and expression of the music. A few months after he came, he was publicly intoxicated. It was a great grief to his family and to us all, even himself. As time went on, we found his failures were frequent. Something must be done. We prayed with him, guarded him, and warned him of his danger. He became sexton of the church. One day I was sick with the grippe. My window was next the church. I saw him fall down three times in going from the church. The world turned dark to me, for I had said by the grace of God this man must be reformed. He was announced to sing in a quartet at a convention in the First Church the next day. I called for tablet and pen. These were the words I wrote:

“DEAR BROTHER WEAKS:—

“Don’t give up. Satan desires to sift you as wheat. Come and see me and let us pray over it.”

As soon as he was sufficiently sobered, he came to my room; we wept together; he kneeled at my bedside and asked God to give him victory over the terrible appetite. The next day he was sufficiently sobered to sing and he did so. Soon after this the holiness of Deacons Willrule and Slyman asserted itself. He must no longer have his place in the church. In fact, their idea was he must not even come into the church. I quietly told Mr. Weak's to take his seat in the congregation for a time; but I boldly contended that it was the duty of the church to save those who had fallen. I have yet to learn where God has told any one who had the interest to come to service that he could not. Much less does he teach any to gather up their garments and draw back and say, "I am holier than thou." Just about that time a Rev. Mr. Crane moved into town. He began to have aspirations for the pastorate of the church, which, of course, he could not get so long as I was the occupant. Then without my knowledge, three currents of influence united against me. Principally, I advocated being patient with Mr. Weak's. I contended as long as he was under our influence it was our

duty to save him if we could. Then they began to cry, "Strong must go." This was good news to Rev. Mr. Crane, as he wanted the place. Sam Spoiler's notion could now get hearing and ere I was aware, Rev. Mr. Crane came to inform me that the church desired a change of pastors. Mark! This thing was not known outside of eight or ten families. So it followed as soon as I asserted myself on the temperance question they could not do otherwise than to quiet down. I told the professedly staunch temperance men, you will get your temperance speakers and listen to their thrilling experiences while trying to save the fallen and count them to be great workers for God, but when your own pastor does that which excels what any of them have done, lo! he must resign. Of course, their plan fell through; Crane's ambition was foiled; and Sam Spoiler had opportunity to sit down and look at his own meanness. Then the work rallied. Mr. Weaks professed conversion, united with the church, and, as we supposed, all was forgotten and we were looking forward to the prize of our high calling of God in Jesus Christ. Then came frequent additions to the church member-

ship. In all I baptised about one hundred during my pastorate, married over one hundred couples and stood over the open grave with many mourners. Our salary was small; five hundred and a donation, and we paid our own house rent. But God knows how willingly we worked, Mrs. Strong playing the organ without compensation. We were satisfied to see the church prosper, and the people professed to love us. Improvements marked every line of effort and there was rapid progress. We grew in the estimation of the public and our efforts received a good support from the public. We all rejoiced and congratulated each other over our future prospects. From time to time repairs were made on the church, a new cement walk was laid, a good religious interest seemed to pervade all and we thanked God and took courage. Visiting brethren were much impressed with the vigor of our work and declared we were a favored people. I doubt whether signs of greater prosperity could anywhere be found. In the year 1900 I took a trip to Europe. To me it was a great occurrence. Every foot of the way was a delight. I could not express my feelings when I first realized

that I was out of sight of land on the Atlantic Ocean. The Gulf Stream, the Newfoundland Banks, the Northern Latitude, the magnificent sunset as we rounded the north of Ireland, the Giants Causeway, the Frith of Clyde, Greenock, Clyde River with its ship-building, and Glasgow will ever be a delight in my memory. Scotland, England, Belgium, Germany, France, what a magnificent world we live in! How wonderful are even the works of man! Cathedrals, Churches, Ruins, Cambridge, Oxford, London, Paris, Cologne and Strasburg, a study for a lifetime in the history of any one. Yes, always material for thought. And then the home again from a foreign shore and in our hearts to exclaim, Grand America! Then duties again. The rented house in which we lived was sold while I was on the Ocean, a cause of great anxiety to Mrs. Strong. This news greeted me in her letter which I received in London. Another house must be sought. What was to be done? After several trustee meetings, it was decided that I should buy my own house, which I did and which we shall undoubtedly occupy until my dying day. I bought the house because I saw if the church

should buy the parsonage, they would not be able to enlarge the church, the thing I so much desired to do. It is a pleasant home for which we do not cease to thank God. One other fact must not be forgotten. At the very first, Deacon Willrule was very frank with me to tell me of his affairs. While he was manufacturing his wagon, it was at a great disadvantage, as he did not have money to get them on the market. His sales were limited, and his contracts with the parties who loaned him money were of that nature that they took the best part of what he did make. He became very much involved financially. His workmen were not paid and they entered complaints about him, especially that he had induced many of them to leave good places to come here, and as they expressed it, "to come here to starve." About that time five hundred dollars of my own money, all that I knew on earth that I possessed, was in the bank. I took this and voluntarily offered to loan Mr. Willrule the amount, particularly basing my action on his integrity, and of his appreciation of what such an act would mean. He received it smiling, instructed his daughter to write on the book, "Brother

Strong loans me five hundred dollars on my integrity." The sequel will show that it was just at this point that he failed. Soon after that, he called at my house with a seventy-five dollar banknote for me to sign. I never kept record, but he kept coming with notes until I was held for from two to three hundred dollars at a time. Often times Notices of Protest would reach me, but in the end these notes were paid and the note also. He was making an effort, he seemed a consecrated man, I took an unbusiness risk with the thought that in this way financial success would come to the church, as he gave every evidence of sincerity and professed that he would give one-tenth of his income to the cause of God. Thus I contributed to make it possible that a prosperous business plant should be in the town. It should have counted to my advantage. Instead, it was wholly ignored, while he unequivocally attacked my ministerial standing. He, and those associated with him, refused to consider any good quality that I possessed and were unable to see that my work was a grand success in every direction. With the community at large, I was in favor, in towns adjoining and conven-

tional work I was cordially greeted. In my study I was especially favored and it pleased God to give me a clear insight into His word, and I could have been easily persuaded that this was the beginning of the millennial dawn. Our daily life was one continuous round of happiness and good cheer. We were living in communion with God. Heaven came down our souls to greet, and glory crowned the mercy seat. It seemed very certain that God was with us.

With much love.

Your son,

STEPHEN STRONG.

THIRD LETTER.

DEAR MOTHER:—

If I could see you and talk with you, I could do better, but must be satisfied to write. I am now about to tell you of a wonderful achievement; the building of a new church, or, rather, the enlargement of the old church. The common observer would not have seen the need of this improvement. But we were looking into the future and saw the need of such an advance at that time. I even seemed to hear the voice of God calling me to the work. In the year 1901, by Mrs. Strong's solicitation, Mr. Wealthy made a subscription of one thousand dollars towards the enterprise. In a few months this was increased by others to about two thousand dollars. This, with the exception of one hundred and fifty dollars, was subscribed by men outside the church, that is, men who did not belong to the church. At that point it rested, on account of the lack of

interest on the part of the church members, as by reason of their small earnings they felt they were not able to subscribe anything to the cause. But so confident were we, that we retained the subscription paper, drew up plans for the improvement and as occasion permitted kept the subject agitated. In 1902 the matter was again pressed. A church meeting was called, the plans were submitted, the necessity of the church member's subscriptions was urged, a committee was appointed to circulate the paper and in a few weeks the members themselves had subscribed about five hundred dollars. This prepared the way for the outside circulation and soon it reached three thousand dollars and more. We sought to let the job to a contractor, but failed. It was now so near fall that it was obliged to go over until the next year. Meantime the First Church was building a new church and were presenting their subscriptions to the people, thus rendering it very hard to keep up the idea of putting our repairs through. Sometimes we felt if we did it, we would be obliged to do so over the heads of the members of the church. Practically that is what we did do, as their attitude

toward the cause was by no means assuring. Still, all saw that the church needed the added room, and none hesitated only at their selfish desire to retain their little pittance should the work be allowed to stop. It had been my purpose to appoint Mr. Fairman, who was chairman of the Board of Trustees, chairman of the building committee, procure an architect, and early in the year 1903 begin the work. In the spring a meeting of the building committee was called, the above plans were presented, the architect was suggested, when Deacon Willrule requested that we should appoint him manager, and he would complete a draft of the plans and would put the whole work through to a finish. As no one else stood ready to do so much, he was appointed. When the plans were completed, we saw that five thousand dollars and upwards would be necessary for the enterprise. The subscription paper was circulated until it reached that amount. But Deacon Willrule was crowded with his work and the matter dragged. Day after day, week after week, I urged him on. In August, 1903, the work began. The excavators, the masons, the carpenters, the decorators, the plumbers,

made the old church a busy place and a happy pastor was congratulating himself over an accomplished work. The improvements being large, they could not be completed before winter. The building was enclosed, and when the winds blew and the snows fell, the workmen were busy inside. It was an exceptionally cold and hard winter. The County Convention was held in a hall in Thrift in the fall, and immediately after, the church discontinued services, the pastor and his wife taking a much needed rest for two or three weeks. This was all the vacation we had for the months we were scattered, with the exception that I could not preach regularly. For a few weeks a few of us met with Grace Church, the pastor taking his turn in preaching there. In all reason, it was expected that everything should bend to getting the church ready to be occupied and we looked forward to it with a glad hope. Meantime the subscription paper was circulated and the absorbing purpose was to have the church dedicated free from debt. It was the custom of the church to begin their Ecclesiastic year with the first of January. The financial plan was not good, but it had been

all it could be under the conditions. The pastor's salary was obtained by a special subscription. It was never paid on time, because of the poverty of the people, but it always came sooner or later. The church was dedicated the seventeenth of January, 1904. It will be seen that the time for circulating the subscription for the pastor's salary came while we were broken up. The pastor himself instructed the committee to let it all rest until after the dedication so as to avoid conflicting interests. Its wisdom was commended when two or three weeks after the opening, the whole amount was subscribed and the funds for the new church were all provided for. Of course, I knew that money did not come to me very fast, but this I attributed to the burdens necessary in paying for the church. The dedication service through, the needed amount pledged for the work, I naturally looked for something to be done for me. I saw the committee and urged to salary and donation. As I see now, both were drifting, and it was the purpose of the committee and their advisors to have it so. As I called upon the chairman of the committee, Mr. Littleman, he insolently informed me that

it was not their purpose to do anything, trying to make it appear that they could not. I asked what the objection to me was and he said, "The preaching was not smart enough." This to me was a terrible blow, it nearly cost me my life. It was a dagger sent to my heart. Yet I did not believe it could be possible after I had carried the work to such a success that enough members could be found to do available harm. I quietly went about my work, was incessant night and day preparing sermons, and other duties, and in much prayer. The donation came off, and as I see now, in spite of all their efforts to spoil it, it was a success. Money was paid in on salary, but it was applied on the arrearages of the previous year. Good congregations were in attendance at the preaching. Things were coming into shape. Subsequent events have shown that all that was lacking was the co-operation of the bosses, who were determined that no part of the honor which belonged to me should ever be given me. I did not know all this, I felt there were obstacles in the way, but I determined, whatever they were, I would overcome them as I had every other difficulty and see the whole enterprise

come through in triumph, with praise to God and honor to men. I cannot even now see how such a victory was prevented. How is it possible that a few leaders could take up such an unholy work and gain any advance at all in a civilized community? I confess that I am wholly uninformed about the workings of that kind of politics. It is too subtle for me and I do not care to become familiar with its diabolical workings. It is just at this point that society is in danger. The many do not seem to inquire why things are as they are, but simply fall in and become sharers in the wickedness of those who lead them. In such light we see a justice that such people should suffer for the sins of their leaders. It is their acquiescence that makes the wickedness possible. In II Samuel 24, we read that the people suffered for David's sin in numbering the people. Seventy thousand died for his folly. Must it always be so? When will the plague stay? Well would it be for the people, if the leaders would confess their fault as David did. Hear him as he pleads with God. "I have sinned and done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray,

thee, be against me, and against my father's house." Then was David permitted to erect his altar and the plague was stayed. But if leaders will go wrong, the people must live with open eyes or bear their own folly. Lest the reader, Dear Mother, lose sight of the real purpose of these letters, we will here plainly state the case. It is a rule in equity and in natural law, that any one is entitled to the legitimate returns of his work. A company of men taking risks should share their gains pro rata according to their investment. It applies to all possible human effort. God himself has ordained that it should be so. Especially does he require it to be so in the working of his church. He declares in His word that the workman is worthy of his hire. The faithful pastor is worthy of his hire and under God is entitled to all the emoluments of his office. Now, what had the pastor done in Thrift? Under Divine leadership he had gone out in advance of the church and had accomplished great results. To be sure, in the end he had enlisted an indifferent church, until all seemed united in accomplishing the evident need and now it was done. Every one who

had done anything for the cause was entitled to his reward. It is a fair question to ask now, what was my part of the reward? Surely they owed me something, more than dollars and cents. We had all along received a precious few of these, for the people told us they were poor. We shared our crust with them, but there is something more to a public man than money. It is his reputation, the minister is dependent upon his ministerial standing. If he is a failure in his work, then it is perfectly fair that he should be called a failure, and step aside and let some one who can succeed come on and take his place. We all know that failure is a hard word to write against any man in his life profession. It is terrible to be borne when his own faults, for any cause whatever, make it impossible to be otherwise. Years ago a minister overtaken in a sin for which he could only blame himself, mournfully asked to be left to himself that he might walk down the plank of life alone. Where is a heart so hard that it is not moved by such a plea, even though his guilt is acknowledged? But with me the case was different. Sermons were preached that moved hearts to repentance, pastoral visi-

tations were constant with words of comfort to the needy. Appropriate rejoicings at the marriage altar, tears of sorrow with those who mourn their dead, opposition to evil in all its forms, and added to all, a church building carried to completion with its cost provided for, the church music taking rank with the best in the land, both pastor and wife highly esteemed by the entire community, and their many friends. If that is not success, then WHERE is it? For all this we were entitled to honor and praise, it belonged to us, anything less than this was robbery. The true pastor seeks men to do them good, when he is maligned and traduced, the people naturally flee from him. I had always supposed that deeds accomplished would show for themselves. The field of corn will be its own witness of the faithful tillage of the day's work done. We do not hesitate to state that he who contradicts such evidence is a falsifier, and yet we know many a man has been despoiled of that which is rightfully his by the intrigues of designing men. But any who judge righteously can only look with contempt upon those who, through any motive, attempt to put down those whom God has

established. The pastor was conscious that a high order of work had been done, he did not think that any company of maligners could make any headway against such achievements, because truth is truth and must stand. If every man waited until everybody should speak favorably of him, he would never take up the work of life. So, while the pastor was aware that a few restless spirits stood ready to destroy all that was good, he did not believe that they could. The question is—Can't men believe their own eyes?—when they know a thing how can it be doubted? If a man witnesses a murder, does he not know it, if the murderer stands his ground and reveals his identity, does he not know who he is? How then can the murderer be recognized as a good man, until he acknowledges his crime and repents? Has it come to pass that churches can traduce their ministers and send them out with aching hearts to bear abuse, and is there no help? They tell us that we must be silent and wait, and ere long some awful punishment will overtake them and God will be avenged. But is it not better that the wrongdoers shall be warned? Must he wait until he has reached the hour

when there is no time for repentance? Must God's cause be fouled with these, and their wrongs, until a universal disgust has risen up causing honest men even to doubt God? Better is it to stand at this very spot and demand restoration and justice. Let it be loudly proclaimed that he who gives his assent to these things, and supports the usurpers, is verily guilty. All along the line, voices of the injured are crying out. No man can be guiltless and disregard this cry. They tell us the church has lost its power. Better is it to stand at this point and demand justice, with wrongs righted and the guilty ones exposed and enable the church to start out on a career where many may be assured of the blessing of God and the confidence of the people. Very lovingly,

Your son,

STEPHEN STRONG.

FOURTH LETTER.

DEAR MOTHER:—

Having been thus frank to tell you of these achievements, you will be prepared to know that any interference, or prevention of success, to the end desired would be a cause of great grief. By the middle of April I began to feel that something was wrong, some one was treacherous, but our aim was complete victory over the whole of it. Congregations were good, Sunday School increasing, music was good. Why should it not be so? We now see why it could not be, then we could not. An underground, concerted plan was being laid to foil us in our attempts. Absence from prayer meeting on the part of some, refusal to do religious duties in meetings seemed to show, but we crowded the work through. To those thus evilly disposed there must have been times of weakening, for only with Satan's help did their plans carry. Had I known

then what I know now, they would not have carried, for a bold assertion of rights on my part would have scattered their forces. It is for this reason that I write these letters, to warn ministers and good people who have the work at heart not to yield the cause of God up to intriguers. There is no question but that right is powerful, and the worst thing the child of God can do is to yield a point of righteousness to evil designers. The Christian life is a life of fellowship and it can be exercised only when men seek each other's good, and in honor prefer one another. The Christ life is a helpful life, it demands fair play, and fair dealing in every particular. It never defrauds a brother of his rightful standing. It is not right to assail another without cause, it is right to stand in self-defense. And yet, with a body of Christians, self-defense should never be necessary. Each should care for the other. So prevalent does God design this to be, that no one should work injury to his brother. To use a figure, it ought to be that one might bare his neck in the public highway and no one should step upon it. But how different was all this with me at that time. With success acknowl-

edged, sermons prepared faithfully with heartfelt desire for the good of the people and the glory of God, clear plans for the future, THEY were preparing to meet me as though these things were NOT so. To such an extent did this occupy their mind, that they failed to do the things necessary for prosperity. Still the weekly work went on. The Sunday school picnic was arranged which was to be an excursion on the canal and a trolley ride to a park. Ostensibly the plans now were for the picnic, REALLY they were laying plans to attack me. When the day of the excursion came, we were disappointed in the attendance, which we could not account for at that time, NOW we can. Their plans for starving their pastor were failing, they could not break up his congregation, something must be done. Accordingly, the night before the picnic a meeting was called for the professed purpose of arranging for the picnic. Twelve or fifteen were convened. At the right time Deacon Slyman asked what could be done to relieve the church of its present pastor. To some it was astounding, but enough bosses were sure to be there to bring it before the meeting. It was discussed by the

few, a committee was appointed to wait on the pastor, consisting of Deacon Willrule, Peter Small and Daniel Downer. The question was asked what effect this would have on the public, and then what would happen if the Elder does not take it pleasantly. One of the leaders said, "It might hurt them for a while, but it would depend on the kind of minister they procured to succeed him." It was talked over pro and con, mostly pro, and they adjourned committed to one of the MEANEST acts that this world ever witnessed. The next day came, the pastor and wife in the excursion. Mrs. Strong led the orchestra music, and the pastor entertained those who had kindly joined with us in the excursion. As we have afterwards learned, the principal topic behind the scenes was the nefarious work of the night before, which we knew nothing of. As the boat neared home, one sister came in an apparent sympathy reviewing our financial obligations, and referred to our burdens. I remarked, "That being the case, we had only to share our burdens and meet our obligations." "Oh!" but she said, "They're not goin' to." What that meant I could not make out, but when the next prayer

meeting night came, Mr. Weak's told Mrs. Strong what had been done. She told him that it could not be possible, they would not be guilty of such a wrong. He assured her that it was so; that a committee of the above named would soon seek me and ask me to resign. We came to our home with broken hearts, and we began to inquire, where is the God of justice and of righteousness? We were not skilled in meeting such exigencies. We knew that it was all wrong, but we seemed paralyzed. We knew we had friends, but where were they? As one said afterward, "Your friends should have been out just as vigorously defending you as they were attacking you." But he bethought himself and said, "That we could not do, as we knew nothing of it until their wicked schemes were accomplished." Mrs. Strong and myself were nearly wild with grief and disappointment. It was impossible for us to conceal our feelings. I was not prepared yet to meet the committee. The next Monday evening I went calling to avoid their calling on me. It was opportune, for while I was out the three executioners came. Mrs. Strong was alone. They entered my home with all their

wonted assurance, asking if I was at home. She informed them I was out calling. They asked when I would be home. She told them she could not tell. They asked what night they could see me. She told them she could not tell. She discovered their determined purpose, and that it would be futile for me to try to evade them longer, and they went away with the understanding that I would appoint a time and place in the near future. When I reached home a short time after, I was informed of their visit and that it was evident that it would do me no good to try to delay it long as they came with a determined spirit. Before I saw them I wanted to see Mr. Wealthy and Judge Church. The next morning I imparted the knowledge to Mr. Wealthy. He was not a member of the church, but had been a regular attendant on Sunday mornings through my entire pastorate. He was at this time in disagreement with his business partner. So much had it affected him that he was in a condition of collapse and was near nervous prostration. As I unfolded to him the plot, he grew nervous and would ask me to stop for a minute that he might gain control of himself, and he would

frequently say, "This is all dead wrong" and then would exclaim, "What an awful sin the sin of ingratitude is." I also called on Judge Church. He was a member of the First Church and was a heavy supporter there. But I had procured a subscription of three hundred dollars from him and I felt that I wanted to make some explanation to him. I introduced the subject by asking him if there was any reason why I might not be a private citizen in Thrift, as I had been informed that a committee was appointed to wait on me and ask me to resign. He was amazed at the intelligence, as he had never heard about the matter, but after a moment of reflection he said, "Certainly, after you have done what you have for them, I think if I were you I would resign with a great deal of dignity." He said farther, "I do not know as it is of any particular advantage to you in this community to be a rattling around with them," and he was very plain in his denunciation of the course they were taking with me. As these two men will be mentioned in the coming pages, we will pass them now. Judge Church retaining his position to his dying day, Mr. Wealthy weakening.

I then notified the committee that I would meet them on Wednesday eve in the pastor's study in the church, and set about preparing myself for so trying an ordeal. At about the hour appointed, the committee came. As I started for the meeting, Mrs. Strong placed a letter to Deacon Willrule in my hand which will soon be inserted in full. That meeting was a scene for an artist. The pose of the committee and pastor should have been photographed and some fine delineator of emotion should describe it. THEIR manner was, THEY owned it all, the pastor had no rights that they were bound to respect. Given that THEY wanted the pastor to resign, no honor, or decency, or principle of fair play, was to enter into the arrangement. Accordingly, the ceremony began. After a few brief words, the pastor told them to say it out now, and give a clear statement of what the trouble was all about. Deacon Willrule asked me how much the church owed me. I told him ALL of the present current year, and part of the preceding year. He said the church would pay me that, I said, "Undoubtedly." Then I asked for the reasons of their actions. Their spokesman, Deacon Willrule,

explained that there had been no church meeting, but several of the representative men of the church had met and instructed them what to say. I then said, "What are your reasons?" and their spokesman gave the following:

FIRST: While they readily acknowledged that, on occasions, and frequently, the pastor preached great sermons, yet sometimes in the ordinary work they got the warmed over stuff.

SECOND: Some of the people wanted the pastor to come into their homes, read a chapter in the Bible, and pray.

THIRD: The church had been to a great expense in repairing and it has now come to be hard work to obtain the running expenses.

FOURTH: They wanted a change.

Each member of the committee had an opportunity to express himself which was simply a substantiation of the above. I then began my answer to their statements. I told them at the outset to understand one thing. Calvary Church has the right to call and dismiss its pastor, and that no one was more pleased to have it so than I was. But, that this attack should come now, when I had so much involved in point of credit for my effort and suc-

cess, and the great wrong that would be done me if they carried out this plan, their present act was an outrage, and was of the devil. It lacked in every principle of fair dealing and honesty, saying nothing about the religion that should prevail in church affairs which ought to silence their plan and call them to a halt. As to the first, I was too indignant to make any reply to it. The idea that in one breath a church acknowledges a preacher's exceptional ability to preach and then try to send the impression abroad that he is a poor preacher. THEN that I would not be honest with God and my congregations and do my best on all occasions was preposterous. It was simply an insult and a lie. As to the second, I asked how long this complaint had been made. They said, "About one and one-half years." Then I said, "The idea that I would not go into any home and pray." But said I, "Don't you know—if you don't you ought to—that I have been on the dead run to bring about these repairs for more than that time. And yet the very thing you are complaining of I have done within a week." I told them they all knew that it was perfectly absurd for them to attack

me in any such way. The third, financial difficulty. I showed them that in reality they were not in straits. If they should go on until January as they were now going, they would not be more than two hundred and fifty dollars in arrears. Now that is a small amount of money, as we have just raised six thousand dollars, but the fact is, you have made this your plan and instructed the committee accordingly. It is the starvation scheme. Either your committee is possessed of the devil, or it is incompetent. So instead of asking me to resign, you should ask them, for such a committee is a curse to any church. But then, said I, for the sake of argument, grant that the people will not give me money. There are ways out of this without this meanness. I told you some time ago, the trustees could make a note for three hundred dollars, and if necessary carry it for years, and it would not hurt the church at all. Or, again, the Ladies' Aid Society have been in the habit of aiding in getting the pastor's salary, which for the past two or three years they have applied to the organ fund. They have been asked to resume their former obligation and let the organ fund wait. But

no, none of these things avail. The facts are, it is your purpose to keep this financial string taut, and let all be on me, knowing that sooner or later it must break to my consternation. In fact, your plan is a plot and you mean my downfall at all hazards." Then I said to Deacon Willrule, "Mr. Willrule, in view of what I have done for you, you could have put your hand in your own pocket and paid every last dollar of the arrearage, and then you would not have done for me what I have done for you." Then I said to Mr. Small, "This is not an ordinary resignation. My home is here, and my part of the great work will be wrenched from me, if you thus mercilessly proceed." I told Mr. Downer, he had worked his plan by coming to Christian Endeavor and purposely going away before preaching with the express purpose of breaking up my Sunday evening congregations, a thing which you have not been able to do, although you have been secretly fighting me while the public knew nothing about it. Only a few weeks before this you held me to a Sunday evening congregation, when neither Grace Church nor First Church could get one, and yet I did. Both of

these churches, however, covered their pastors from this strain by taking up their evening services during the time of the vacation. So when you come to me assuming that we do not have good congregations, you are falsifying. I then told the committee I would answer them on Sunday. Then I turned to Deacon Willrule and said, "Here is a letter from Mrs. Strong to you, you can read it to these gentlemen if you wish to." I said, "You will notice that she has presented a bill for four hundred and seventy-eight dollars and twenty-five cents for playing the organ and other expenses we have been to." I then retired and left them to read the letter.

THE LETTER.

THRIFT, July 20, 1904.

MR. WILLRULE:—

Do not think for one moment that you are doing the Lord's work when you are making such work of the Lord's cause as this. We have given ten of the best years of our lives to building up and talking up the cause of the Calvary Church in this place, and you are tear-

ing this down, and all the work and money that others through our influence have given. Mr. Wealthy and Judge Church say that they would not have given their money only for Mr. Strong, and, as they considered, his good judgment. We supposed then that the church would prove worthy of the trust committed to them through our effort. They have proved themselves unworthy, and you as their leader, are held responsible. Mr. Wealthy, a member of the pulpit committee, and giving one-fourth of the money for the building of the church, says he has not been consulted in this matter. He says he would not have believed it possible that in the name of the church such an outrage could be committed; that it would have been better for the church in the eyes of this community if they had locked the church doors. For it, he says, is the destruction of the church and that after we have done for the church what we have done, instead of receiving such treatment as this, the church, and you, as their leader, should have sustained Mr. Strong in every possible way, by kindness, and love, and appreciation, and left it to Mr. Strong's good judgment when it would be best for him to

leave; that the work was not completed, that much was yet to be done which only Mr. Strong could do and for this attack to come now was not only unkind but cruel. Mr. Wealthy also says, that he never felt so bad in his life, that it is crushing him, so he cannot even talk about it. He has been to see you two or three times and did not find you, and yesterday he told Mr. Strong he felt so dreadfully over it that in his nervous condition he feared he should drop dead if he should talk with you. He, not a member of the church, has more regard for the life and standing of the church than you have. Judge Church feels the same in regard to this treatment. He says that we shall stand high, while the church will suffer and go down. The church must not hold us responsible for this. We have tried in every possible way to avoid this calamity, and God or men will not hold us responsible. The trouble is made to appear that it rests on our salary, for which we should never have been made to suffer as we have, while we were giving our best effort all the time for the church. We have tried to plan in different ways to help in the matter, every plan has

been resisted, making it evident that the money and effort, on the part of the church, were purposely withheld. The whole thought is unrighteous, and then to put a climax on such unrighteousness to attack Mr. Strong on his preaching, when the whole community say now and have in the past, that he always sustains himself in a highly creditable manner. You would not only try to starve him, but you would also rob him of his standing as a minister of the Gospel. This last week Mr. Wealthy said that Mr. Strong had helped you in your business standing, when not a business man in the community would have done it. That he would not himself, and he at the time advised Mr. Strong not to. He thinks this a poor return. It would have been better for you and a duty you owe yourself, as well as Mr. Strong, to have helped Mr. Strong from your own pocket in his time of need and help, than to lose the regard of the people of this place as you have now done. Do not walk the streets of this town with the same assurance you have, public opinion will see the right of this. This church belongs to us more than to its members. Mr. Wealthy and Judge

Church and every one outside say it would never have been rebuilt but for Mr. Strong. And it is a pity we could not be allowed to enjoy it with peace and fellowship with the people we supposed were our friends, and for whom we have worked so faithfully, for at least one year. We loved the church, and the people in it, have given ten of the best years of our lives to it, and then as a reward, to receive such treatment as this, I resent it with all the strength there is in me. Do not talk to me of love and friendship, this conduct is far from that. When I first heard of that secret meeting, and that it was decided to send three men, and you one of the three, I said, "They ought to bring their guns with them and finish their work, for this is murder in the sight of God." Do you know what this has done for me? It has almost made me doubt God. I have had two weeks of such struggle as I never had in my life. I am capable of loving a cause and people as few can or do. I had given that to this people. I have in the last two weeks lived through the death and burial of that love and interest. I have slept very little in that time, my strength is almost gone.

You have almost killed my husband, whose life and health are precious to me. You have killed my love for you and my faith in people, and not until last night did I gain the victory of my trust in God. With it came the feeling that I not only regretted the service I had given in love for this church, but I am ashamed that I have given it to a people so unworthy of it. And, since in return we do not have the love and appreciation due us, I not only ask, but demand a very small payment for the service I have given this church. You will see from the bill I present, that I do not include the time spent in four or five concerts every year, or extra rehearsals for solo, duet and quartet work, or orchestra work, and music I have bought and given this church. I have been asked many times by people outside the church what salary I received for my work; they thought it so foolish for me to do it for nothing. They were wiser than I. I did it for love and appreciation and to help the cause. I shall never be so unwise again. I thought the night you three came to the house on the errand you came with, that I could remember when you came to our home on very

different errands. When you wanted Mr. Strong to sign notes with you. The only friend you had that would do that for you; no business man would have done that for you. Also, Mr. Strong loaned you the five hundred knowing that you were insolvent, but at the same time telling you he would take no present for it. It was loaned you on your integrity. He knew that whatever protection you might give him would be of no value as soon as your property should pass to a receiver's hands. Now you have come to prosperity, instead of allowing yourself to be a party to smite and kill the hand that has blessed you, and helped you, it would have been more fitting and appropriate for you to have given Mr. Strong a present of five hundred in return for the five hundred he loaned you in your time of need. I have heard and read of such gratitude as that. You COULD have proved yourself a Christian man; by standing up for him and sustaining him with your influence as he did for you, and not allow such an injustice to come. If Mr. Strong could not speak above a whisper, and that not more than ten minutes at a time, the church could afford to keep him,

and love him, and appreciate him, instead of doing this wicked ungrateful deed in the sight of God and man. This church ought to be so ashamed of themselves for this treatment of him, that they could not hold up their heads. I do not include any who are innocent and do not know of this wicked plot to destroy and kill Mr. Strong. Do not tell me that this is doing God's work. It is the work of the devil. And you and others need to repent on your knees for the worst of all sins, INGRATITUDE. The judgment of God will follow this. For the Bible says, "Woe unto him who hurts one of his children, it were better for that man if he were drowned in the depths of the sea." Also, "Touch not the Lord's anointed and do my prophets no harm." People are very careless of God's warnings in these days, and while the Lord is slow to anger and of great mercy, he is also just! and sins that are not repented of must receive punishment. There are degrees of sin. The sins of card playing and dancing and theater going are mild, compared to this. With the exception of four or five Sabbaths in all these years, we have supplied the pulpit at our expense in

Mr. Strong's absence. With the exception of three weeks, during the months we were repairing, we were working for the church; trying to get money for the church. I shall present a bill for our expenses to the State Convention, as we should not have gone only for the church. Other churches give their ministers vacations, often helping, or paying their expenses; and do not allow them to worry about their salary. Mr. Prudence receives payment on his salary every week and Judge Church said, "When Mr. Prudence resigned it would be at his own option; they should never ask him to resign." If Grace Church are back on their pastor's salary, the trustees make a note every quarter and pay their pastor, and do not allow him to worry. In contrast, this church has not only allowed Mr. Strong to be greatly embarrassed, but have deliberately tried not to get his salary; and then have the audacity to criticise his sermons and say, "Poor souls, that they cannot get interested." I have told him a good many times, the last six months, I did not see how he could preach such grand sermons when he could not meet his bills. And when the church was SO in-

different, he was charitably excusing them all the time, until this knowledge of what they were trying to do came to him. He asked you to loan him money. You refused, not seeing it worth your while to relieve him. You have had money for your own pleasure and your family and you have not lost any sleep on account of the needs of your pastor. And others in the church have not seemed to care; and then call this doing God's will. I do not so understand His will. Mr. Strong is not in any sense responsible for this letter. I should send it to you, and stand by it, if he and all the world should forbid my doing it. It is a duty I must do in the sight of God, however you may receive it."

Sincerely,

MARGARET STRONG.

Your affectionate son,

STEPHEN STRONG.

FIFTH LETTER.

DEAR MOTHER:—

After this awful experience, I went to my home nearly crazed with sorrow and grief. My dear wife seemed as if in a trance. All seemed the sounding of our death knell and we only wondered why we did not succumb to the butcherous attack. Still, we did not feel that, after reading that letter, they would allow me to resign. And we did think they would desist from their nefarious schemes. But the days rolled by and we were forced to the awful conclusion that they did mean our public death. And nothing less than this would satisfy their greed for our blood. Just how to word the resignation was a great care to us, for we did not want to hurt the cause; neither did we wish to make the pulpit, in any sense, a place for controversy, or to use it as an opportunity for saying harsh

things. After consideration, my resignation was put in these words.

“THRIFT, July 24, 1904.

“I hereby present my resignation as pastor of this church. The above to take effect and my duties to terminate September 1st, 1904, providing my salary is paid in full to that date.

“STEPHEN STRONG.”

I ought to give an incident in Mrs. Strong’s experience the night before the committee met us. We had passed a sleepless night, as best we could. About six A. M. she came to me, saying, “I see it different now. This is our Gethsemene. You did not need this. But the church needed it. You can’t be pastor again, but God will vindicate himself.” Then she began to pray, “Dear Saviour, I have been with you all night in the Garden, and I have not slept as the disciples did, and thou knowest it. Thou knowest how our hearts were set on this work and what this usage means to us, thou knowest this leaves us without protection, and a very little money. But thou wilt take care of us and we can trust thee. Then, they have seen fit, to criticise your preaching.

They will see the day when they will be glad to hear your voice again, but they cannot. Then there is the beautiful Baptistry, they have not allowed you to baptise ONE in it. And thou knowest I have been into every room in our beautiful home and have tried to find if there was not one room where I could spend a Sunday, and I could not find it, I wanted to go away. But I can do it now, for thou wilt be with me and my darling, but the church must see this and pass through this Gethsemine, even as we do." I saw at once what was on her mind, it was simply this, that, at the conclusion of my last sermon she should give her experience, and then expect God to break down all hearts with His overpowering presence. I told her I would not interfere with her if God called her to that duty. With these experiences and many others, the hours from Wednesday evening dragged slowly on; EVERY MOMENT AN ETERNITY. But as no other visitations came, we could see no other way than that I should present my resignation, which I did with the above wording.
* * * Sunday morning came. * * * Mrs. Strong at the organ; the orchestra and choir

in their places; the house well filled. The usual service was gone through; even the last hymn was sung. The pastor could see that the discontents were getting uneasy, and that further delay, on my part, would be too great a strain upon our already exhausted nerves. I then asked the congregation to be seated and read the resignation. To many it came as a peal of thunder from a clear sky; but the bosses maintained their harshness and turned the whole atmosphere into gloom and depression. One lady from Grace Church came to me and said, "This is NOT religion, it is the WANT of it." Some of the heartless women went to Mrs. Strong to shake her hand as though it were a common school day experience. She said to them, "This is our Gethsemine. You must yet have yours." But they resented the idea, defiantly saying, "No Gethsemine for them." That evening a union service with the other churches was held at the Calvary Church. The house was full. At the conclusion the shallow brained church clerk, without any explanation or statement, read a call for a church meeting in two weeks to consider the resignation of their pastor. To say

the least of it, it was not in good taste, and if the call was necessary at all, it should have been given the following Sunday morning. But they could not allow this opportunity to pass. It was too good a chance for them to flaunt their obloquy on the public. Members of other congregations came to me saying, "What does this mean, we supposed that there was the utmost harmony between pastor and people." I told them, "It was all the doings of the people and they would have it to answer for." Mrs. Strong and I went to our home in a dire plight. It did us no good to say, "Would God it were morning," for as soon as morning came we would say, "Would God it were night." The truth was, it seemed to us we had reached the limit of all endurance and were wondering what the next step could be. As slow as it was, the night wore away. But it made deep inroads upon our lacerated nerves. As a means of relief, we concluded to lock our house for the week and go to friends in an adjoining town. But even new surroundings did not lift the awful spell. If God had got through with us, why did he not take us away from earth? The call

of death would seem nothing as compared with this. Here, too, was material of which to make infidels. If such people were Christians and if such doings were legitimate church work, then, of course, no good man or woman would want anything to do with the church. But we were too well grounded in the faith to allow that temptation to hold. We could come to only one conclusion, and that was, that they were of their father, the devil, and his works they were doing. With us the whole effort seemed to be to keep breathing for what purpose we could not tell. Right here we can see where men uselessly commit suicide, it does for the moment seem that the act of FELONIE DE SE would bring a relief. But a second thought says NO. No one should go uncalled into the presence of his Maker. With Job we must say, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." Tuesday evening brought the Daily with its flaring headlines, "ASKED TO RESIGN," and then going on to state that Mr. Strong was asked to resign, inferring that it was a perfectly legitimate thing for the church to do, leaving the public to infer my

exceeding unpopularity. This I purposely destroyed so that Mrs. Strong could not see it. The next evening flaring headlines were in the paper, "MRS. STRONG'S BILL," claiming five hundred dollars for playing the organ for more than nine years and other expenses for the church. This nearly killed her. She declared she could never go to Thrift again. A terrible pressure was in her head. The awful suspense of what this strain might produce was almost unbearable to me. Saturday afternoon came. I must go to Thrift for the Sabbath. I did not feel as though I could ask her to go, as I knew the strain was tremendous. But when she saw me about to start, she said, "YES, I will go and play the organ as long as you stay." Accordingly, we both came on. The next Sabbath I was to preach in Calvary Church in the morning and in the First Church in the evening. This called for music only for the morning in Calvary Church. I went with her to the church Saturday afternoon while she rehearsed her part for the orchestra and choir. In the edge of the evening the orchestra, consisting of eleven instruments, came and practised. It was not

my custom to attend the choir rehearsals. I spent my time in my study in preparation for the next day's service. This was known by all. I was just returning from the market and the postoffice as the orchestra rehearsal closed. A brother asked me if I had seen my wife. My heart came in my mouth, for I feared she might have collapsed under the strain. I hurried home, but he said, "No, not there." Then I hastened to the pastor's study in the church to witness the most disgraceful thing that my eyes ever rested on. There sat Deacon Willrule, Deacon Slyman and John Littleman terrorizing my wife. All three of them did know enough to know that I read them clear through; and understood the depth of their meanness. Had they all been knocked flat, they would not have received their full deserts. This meeting was brought about in this way. At the conclusion of the orchestra rehearsal, Deacon Willrule went to Mrs. Strong as she sat on the organ stool waiting for the choir to take their places, and asked her if she would meet the above named in the pastor's study. Deacon Willrule was spokesman, as usual. "Now, Mrs. Strong," he says,

"you would not have presented that bill if this thing had not happened." She said, "Certainly not, I played for love, the good of the cause and the appreciation of the people. But as I did not have any of these, I now ask the usual money remuneration for such service." Then Deacon Slyman chimed in, telling her that she had lost all the friends she ever had for putting those things in the paper. She said, she had put nothing in the paper. He said, "Then your husband has." She said "No." Just then I entered the room. There was a gleam of triumph in Deacon Slyman's eye, for he knew that the steel had entered her soul. He gloated over this opportunity for cruelty. I immediately said, "You charge us with making this thing public. I will tell you when the publicity began. It was when you began your deviltry. Did you expect you were going to do this nefarious business and the papers not get it? You know they would." Then Deacon Willrule said, "Now, Mrs. Strong, understand me. I will give you one dollar a Sunday for your playing as long as your husband stays." She replied, "I know what you want. You don't want me to play

the organ any more, and I will not." I said, "No, Margaret, you need not! and you need not come into this church any more," for I saw that she was fast passing beyond the line of physical endurance. It was now nine o'clock Saturday night. It would be a physical impossibility to get her into the church the next morning. I went into the audience room for her glasses and there were choirister and choir awaiting the report of the murderous attack. The choirister insolently said, "Are we going to have an organist?" I did not answer, but hastened to my wife, took her by the arm and led her home. She immediately said, "Now the orchestra will not play unless I do and you must go and tell the leader." I feared to leave her alone. But I concluded to take the half hour to do it. On my return home I went for Dr. Helpful, our physician, who knew about our woe. I told him of this new abuse, and asked him to come home with me and come prepared to stay until morning if need be, as I was not certain that either of us could endure until that time. He came, and in gratitude I want to say that we and the public are greatly indebted for the skillful

work of that night. He stayed with us until past midnight, leaving us greatly comforted, with anodynes to help the will in controlling nerves. It was a lovely moonlight night. I walked home with him, as I wanted his private ear in reference to my wife's condition. We passed in front of the church. I faced about. I said, "Doctor, look at that church! a perfect gem from cellar to spire, including grounds. My very blood and the blood of my wife are in it and yet we cannot enjoy it." He said, "Doctor, your church has betrayed you in the eyes of this community just as much as Judas ever betrayed Christ. We of the community are very sorry for it, but we can't help it, they have done it. But rest assured you have the profound sympathy of this community and I know it." I have thought of those words a great many times. Judas betrayed Christ; but he went to his own place. He did not attempt to found the church. But these betrayers pose as the disciples of Christ; and would fain make us believe that such proceedings are acceptable to the God of righteousness. They stand as my accusers to charge me with my unchristian doings. My sin

is that I did not fall just right when they killed me. Their plan was that I should fall dead, face down. But instead, there I was, face up. Not fully dead. In fact, I did not die the usual way, and for that I was a sinner above all others. NO, I do not accept the criticism, but I do place them among the persecutors. Notwithstanding this attack, we lived until morning. It was for me to preach twice that day. How I controlled my nerves to do so, I cannot now tell. But both sermons were preached, one in Calvary, the other in the First Church. Mrs. Strong attended neither service. Home was a sad place to come to; myself nearly exhausted by the strain, my darling wife on the very verge of collapse. During the week we received many expressions of sympathy, and some way we discovered we were enduring the strain. Two Sab-baths wore away. Then on Wednesday night came the church meeting called to consider my resignation, and to give them opportunity to affirm their previous wickedness. I concluded not to go near it. For I did not know who my friends were. My friends mostly stayed at home, only five or six of them going to

the meeting. This gave Deacon Slyman opportunity to talk it all his own way. So in a heartless manner he began to make motions. First, he moved that the church accept the pastor's resignation, beginning his remark as though they were all engaged in a burlesque, sarcastically remarking that the best of friends must part. Second, he moved that the church give a vacation to the pastor and that he only preach two Sundays more. The church paying the salary for the remaining two Sundays. Both of these resolutions were carried. BUT NOT ONE WORD OF THANKS TO PASTOR AND WIFE FOR THE WONDERFUL WORK THEY HAD DONE. The pastor knew the two weeks vacation only meant two Sundays SHUT OFF, for they were evidently afraid that harsh things might be said. However, the vacation was accepted and I now realized that two Sundays more would close my active ministry in the church. For those two Sundays I concluded to make no public reference to the affair, leaving it to God, the community, and the church at large to vindicate my right. Accordingly, the first Sabbath was spent with no apparent, unusual

interest. During the week some came to talk it over. One sister said, "To be sure you and Mrs. Strong will come right along to church." I said, "What do you think I am made of? Is it possible for me to sit and worship with those who have tried to starve me and my wife for seven long months, and who are only sorry that they could not accomplish it?" Is it worship to join with unrepentant sinners in their own wickedness? Were the disciples asked to worship with Judas after he had betrayed Christ?" Another one came to Mrs. Strong and said, "Surely, you will come right along to church." She said, "No." It was not two weeks ago that I came alone to the church, went into every room and prayed, even into the cellar. I said, "Now, Father, I thank thee I have a place where I can work for thee. I consecrate myself to do this work. But now I do not feel at home, not even as much as where I place my foot." It remained for us to learn what God wanted us to do. We were taught on this question in a very forceable manner. We could not mistake. Inquiries came from distant friends as to what this all meant. Of course this was very humiliating.

There is nothing we shrink from more than to be obliged to admit to friends that others have belittled and humiliated us. And particularly when every power of our being assures us that we are worthy of honor. Under such circumstances it is terrible to receive undeserved contempt. Alas! if this is the necessary way of human life, then life is a tragedy. Then must men be the prey of evil designers. But let not the public be thus deceived, in the day of earthly doom when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll such things cannot stand. Before the two weeks of service had passed, an awful experience came. This was the year of the St. Louis Exposition. The Willrule Wagon Company had placed a man in St. Louis to exhibit the wagon. It was arranged that about the middle of August James Willrule, who had this year graduated from the public schools, the eighteen-year-old son of Deacon Willrule, should take the place of this man and remain until the close of the Exposition. He went on, that he might have about two weeks to look around before his duties began. But he had been in St. Louis only a few days when he was taken violently

sick with appendicitis. He was taken to the hospital and word was sent to his father to come immediately, which was fully complied with. Of course, under such circumstances, there was great public anxiety in reference to James's condition. Once the report came that he had submitted to an operation and was doing well. This, however, did not comfort long, for a telegram came saying that he was dead. This was terrible. A young man cut off in the morning of his hope. Also, he was a young man of fair ability and as the plans for his improvement showed, receiving unusual privileges. We must now look for the return of the body and the funeral. You can see, Dear Mother, what a position this placed me in. What was my duty in the case, or, rather, how was the family to use me? Soon a rumor came from the house that I was neglecting them. I did not learn this until Sunday P. M. When I went into the pulpit on Sunday morning a notice was on the stand to the effect that the funeral of James Willrule would be held from his late home on Tuesday afternoon at two o'clock. No one had been near me, I had not been consulted about the

funeral; on the whole, what could I say or do? I read the notice; in the prayer I prayed for the stricken family and community. After the evening service, at about nine-thirty, we were waiting for the body to come. I went down to the depot; the white hearse and crowds of people were there, as might be expected under such harrowing circumstances. I joined in the procession, went to the home, and sat there more than half an hour. Deacon Willrule and his wife came and spoke to me. That was all. The undertaker showed me the body and I came home in a maze of bewilderment. Monday morning Deacon Slyman came to my house announcing the plan of the funeral. It was changed to be held at the church; the Grace Church Minister was to preach; I was to pray. The Immanuel Pastor, who was principal of the school, was to read the Scripture. I could do no other than submit. Of course I was not so stupid as not to know that the Grace Church Minister stood in my place. It was hard for me to face the large congregation, conjecturing that I was in dishonor, for what, no one knew. My ambitions, my pride, my rights, were all trampled

in the dust. I must submit to let the curious conjecture. It was a sad scene. To me it was tragic. But of one thing I am sure, no act of mine from first to last came in to interfere with the privilege of the family to bury their dead as they chose. At such times words are poor comforters. No tongue or pen can express the depths of meaning that such experiences carry. I made no criticism on the officiating clergyman at the time, but really, I had the right to expect that he should have come to me and expressed regrets that it should be so. He should have told me that under all the circumstances he reluctantly consented to officiate, as the dead must be buried, but this he did not do. I suppose he would say that his duties were so pressing that he could not get time. When in reality he did not have time NOT to do so. For he knew he was taking my place. Which I would have filled, if the death had occurred a month before. Besides, up to this time we had been on most friendly and brotherly terms. I do not say this to criticise, but do most earnestly put in a plea for ministerial courtesy, one towards another. The hour of service over,

the large congregation passed around to see the face of the dead boy. As we looked on his face, we could but say how fleeting are all earthly things. They pass from us ere we have reached them. Even those who remain seem to linger only to drink the bitter dregs of sorrow and disappointment. The earth closed over these mortal remains and new scenes were spread out before us. Margaret and I seemed to be walking in the land of shadows and were wondering why death did not do its work upon us. Soon people began to come to me and say, they believed that James' death was a judgment of God on the father. I invariably told them, I knew nothing about that. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. And yet it did seem passing strange that not three weeks before in Margaret's letter to him she had used these words, "The judgment of God will follow this, etc." But as for myself I make no declaration. I do not attempt to solve the problem. I leave it with the unfathomable for God himself to reveal.

Your loving son in deep sorrow,
STEPHEN STRONG.

SIXTH LETTER.

MY DARLING MOTHER:—

The scenes of the previous letter can never be effaced from my memory. Whole lifetimes had crowded themselves into my experience, and it was becoming difficult for me to act in reference to present duties. It was certainly a care to me to prepare for the final sermon. That hour was fast approaching, Margaret was rendered physically unfit to take any farther public part in the matter. It remained for me to close up the drama and bring these heart-rending scenes to a conclusion. I dreaded the final Sabbath. How could I get strength to stand before a congregation under such a pressure. Sunday morning came. I simply preached a gospel sermon to a large congregation. A stranger present would have detected nothing unusual. But when a minister's heart is full of present woes and absorbing conditions, it is difficult to fix the mind on

a theme and follow it. By the help of God I succeeded in doing this. I held myself open for any sympathizer to approach me, and did receive expressions of sympathy from a goodly number. I knew that all interest must culminate in the evening service. I entered the church that night with feelings such as I never had before or since. I was passing through the opening gate, which was to lead me into a life with which I was entirely unfamiliar. As the hour for service drew near, it became apparent that the deacons and ushers had planned for a very small audience. The spirit of depression pervaded the room and the expectation was, that a few would assemble, listen to my unimportant words, the curtain would fall, and I would pass on to my destined obscurity. The electric lights were dimly on, as though the congregation was not gathering to the most important service that was ever held in the church, or ever will be held in it. Soon the seats in the audience room were all occupied, the dim lights continuing. The people must be seated. The rolling doors were opened, audience room and session room were filled and the full light of

a brilliantly lighted room fell on an intelligent audience, more than one-half of which were wondering why I was preaching my farewell sermon. The interest was tense. Some were fearful that my strength would give out before it was over. Some told me afterwards that they could not see how I could preach at all. They expected to see me overpowered and fall headlong. There was a muffled stillness and expectation was at fever heat. I subsequently learned that Mrs. John Littleman, sitting two or three seats back, was heard by many to say, "What an old hypocrite he is; he will sizzle in hell." The hymns were announced and sung, the prayer was offered. I took for my theme, THE NIGHT OF THE BETRAYAL OF JESUS. I brought before the minds of the hearers the scenes of that awful night. It was the evening of the passover. Jesus sat down with the twelve. He told who should betray him, Judas went out and Jesus passed into Gethsemine. His soul was sorrowful unto death. The burden of the ages past and to come was upon him; He saw the betrayer coming; the multitude with staves; He saw the Cross; he shrank from it.

In my remarks I put special stress upon the garden sorrow. The agony that Jesus endured when he sweat great drops of blood. I made it clear that Jesus lived a life that we were to copy after; in fact, we were to follow Him. It means much to follow Jesus. Many say they do. But do they understand what it means? It is not enough to follow him when all would honor Him and make Him King; we are not to follow him in the ordinary paths alone; we are to go with Him in the dark hours: ALL THE WAY: IN GETHSE-MINE. Yes, they were to follow Jesus *all* the way, through the Garden, for there he was. It is a significant fact that Jesus shrank from it. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," but through it all he went, and ever since, the world has looked on and wondered. So must his disciples do. Right here is the solution of many church failures. We seem to be seeking after the spectacular. As the Romanist is impressed by the pomp of ceremony, and the august presence of high church dignitaries in elegant apparel: Protestantism seeks to allure by the number of its denominational adherents and the splendor of its great suc-

cesses. But a little reflection will show that this is not the plan of the great founder of the church. It may seem hard, but the only way out from our sins is through Gethsemine's way. Had Cortes in Mexico and Pizarro in Peru come fully to this idea in their conquests, they would have left us a different Mexico and a different Peru from what we have to-day. I told them. Yea, verily! we must all pass through this way. I was not there to chide them. We all hold back from such experiences. But come they must into every Christian life; and fortunate will it be for those who endure unto the end; for only such shall sing the song of the redeemed in the glory world. It may be hard to go to the Cross, but go we must. The world must be crucified; our evil dispositions must be conquered; we must learn self-abasement. How futile then for man to exalt himself; how foolish to place our wills above the will of God. Then, face all duty; let integrity, manhood, honor, justice, fair deal, lead us as they will; we must pay the price, even to our own discomfiture. We must be kind to one another, we must be our brother's protector. To do

less than this, is to sadly fail. It is to place ourselves where the wrath of God is out against us. I then referred to the fact that this was my closing service in these words. In conclusion, it will be proper that I should make a short personal reference to my work among you. I may say that in all my pastorates I have tried to be a faithful minister of the gospel. Out of the entire number of these pastorates, two have stood out conspicuous as giving evidence of a great amount of hard work, combined with skill to bring things to pass. The one which presents my greatest achievement, is Thrift. Next to this, is Mineral Springs. The Mineral Springs Church had years before my pastorate been erected at a cost of twenty thousand dollars. By bad management the subscriptions had many of them failed, so that at the time I went to them they were five thousand dollars in debt, and were completely discouraged and were about to sell their church for a boarding house. The people had absolutely refused to give any more to the cause. I took up the work, raised the five thousand dollars, cleared the church from all obligation, and opened the way for their

prosperity. I found I had done a work for an appreciative people. Understand me, I did not give that money. The people did. And very many assisted me in getting it. But they recognized my part in the matter. They kept my salary up, were full of expressions of appreciation and kindness, and over and above all ordinary offerings made me a donation of four hundred dollars. Without my knowledge, I found that they had prepared a petition for my continuance with them. They declared in this paper that they would be willing to become a Mission Church if I could be continued with them for at least one year. They would be better pleased if I might remain with them my lifetime. This was signed by four hundred people. Nearly all the members of my church and congregation, members of other churches, all of the ministers of the town, and many citizens. Other kindnesses, which I need not now mention, were shown me, making it evident that they were possessed of the spirit of gratitude." "Ten years ago I came to Thrift, found the church in a very discouraged and discouraging condition. During these years I have baptized nearly one

hundred; have received many into the church by letter; have been among the people sympathizing with them in all their troubles and rejoicing in their successes. Nearly all this time I have been laying plans and doing work that we might have our church enlarged and beautified. At last we have succeeded. The work has been done at a cost of six thousand dollars. Four thousand dollars, or about that, has been raised by my own effort outside the church. It has been a hard struggle on my part, but all the way along I have been willing to make the sacrifice, for I was looking to its completion and the full rounding out of so noble an enterprise." I then quoted Via Dolorosa, by Alice Pettus Dillard (a street in Jerusalem along which Christ is said to have passed bearing his Cross, is still called Via Dolorosa or Sorrowful Way):

Dear Christ, because the way
That thou didst walk on earth was sorrowful
And they that seek it find, oft marked with
blood
Thy footprints; shall I say:

Give me a sunnier path, more flowers to cull,
And all things which this world calleth good!

Nay, tender, patient friend,
Though "sorrowful that way"—take thou my
hand

And lead me in it, though I cannot see
Through blinding tears, its end;
It matters not, I know 'tis to the Land
Where longing hearts meet face to face with
Thee!

'Twill often lead I know,
Away from earth, to many a lonely height,
From which the world will seek to tempt me
by

The many flowers that grow
Beside its pathways, and which, to the sight,
Are fair and gay, but ah so quickly die.

And as I journey on
I know my feet will one day reach the gate
Of some sad Garden of Gethsemine,
Where I must kneel alone
In darkness, as thou didst, and pray that fate
Will take away some "cup" she pours for me.

'And if, oh! Perfect One
Thou sayest these trembling lips that cup must
drink,
Quiet their sobbing,
Till they say with thee:
"Father, thy will be done,"
And when I feel thee near, I will not shrink,
But to its dregs will drink it silently.

The last hymn was sung, the benediction pronounced, the large congregation arose and seemed to stand as if under some spell, not seeming to comprehend that the service was closed. As if with an impulse from God, Judge Church came forward to the pulpit, extended his hand to me, saying these words, "I want to thank you for that splendid sermon. And I want to express to you my sympathy, and I want you to know that you have it." Another Elder of the First Church who sat with the Judge then extended his hand saying, "Me, too!" Both of them spoke loud enough so that anyone in any part of the house could hear them and many did hear them. During the preaching and the profound attention, when I referred to my success at Mineral

Springs, Mrs. Littleman was heard to say, "Better speak of his failures." In the sense in which she desired to be understood there were no failures. True, like all ministers it is not for me to boast. I must acknowledge frailties. But if we were to understand that any such acknowledgment is to become the occasion to overthrow the life work of God's ministers, then humility can never have place again in the House of God. I mention her criticism because she is a prominent instructor of the children in the Sunday School. What shall we expect of the rising generation if they catch the spirit of such a teacher? You will notice, Dear Mother, that I did not definitely refer to my persecutions or my persecutors. I had noted down these words that followed for the Sunday evening sermon, but on reflection left them out. "As a reward for this, that is, my great work and great success in Thrift, the pittance which has been called a salary has been purposely withheld. I am now being paid with QUIT MONEY. I am asked to resign, and the state of things in the church has become utterly unbearable to myself and mine." While I did not use these words, they

were absolutely true. And in view of all I had done, showed without a peradventure, that we were in the midst of a heartless, unappreciative people, who did not have the honor that was common among thieves, to say nothing of my right to Christian sympathy and love. The saloon keepers of the town sent word up to the church, "We would not have used Mr. Strong like that if he had been one of our number." One hotel keeper approached me and I remarked that what hurt me was, I supposed I was among friends. He replied, "The more of such friends you have, the worse off you are," and he is correct. Now, no one who knows me would for a moment charge me with catering to the liquor influence. These men had more than once felt my lance, during the years I had been here, in the advocacy of temperance. I mention it to show how so-called temperance workers will seemingly work on in the cause and wonder why they do not make more rapid progress in the work of reform, when in reality, in their public work they have forfeited the respect of all men. If men are to be reformers, they must conduct themselves so as to gain the confidence of those who need

reforming. Sinners will not be saved by the work of those who have publicly condemned themselves. Yet, this was the position of the Calvary Church in Thrift at this time. Truly, they had a hard task on hand, but it is amazing how ready they seemed to be to take up their impossible work. For two weeks there was no service in the church, I was on my "VACATION." But when the first of September came, they came with my salary, and I must receive it, as humiliating as it might be, on the condition that I quit. Of course, I took the money, for I had earned it many fold. I could not see how such a people could take one step in the holy work of God. What can such men and women do to bring the world to God? How can such a pulpit committee make a call for a new pastor? They would have paid the highest compliment to the cause of Christ by closing their doors. What they do under such conditions is simply loading for the plunge of doom. But to my surprise, a former pastor was announced to preach and he occupied the pulpit for the first two Sabbaths. Of course I felt indignant that he should do so. But he came to me and asked an inter-

view. I told him at the outset that I was informed that when he was at the dedication receiving honors at my hands in preaching the principal sermon of the occasion, he was not loyal to me. And then I told him what he said, but he declared he did not say it, and he WAS loyal to me. I then told him the story of my abuse. And he, in his characteristic way, said, "There had not been a meaner thing done in hell than their usage of me." He also said, his being here was accidental and had he known it all he would not have preached for them. He also said that at this time he had been given opportunity to make himself a pusilanyous nothing, but he would not. He went from the place very much depressed. But his presence was used to brace the church in its iniquity. Another circumstance contributed to strengthen them in their unchristian work. It was the custom of Grace Church, First Church and Calvary Church to hold union services from time to time. Immediately, Rev. Mr. Cool and Rev. Mr. Prudence sought their fraternity and the union services continued. GRACE CHURCH, FIRST CHURCH, AND CALVARY.

CHURCH BUILT A RELIGIOUS BRIDGE, WHICH CALVARY CHURCH COULD NOT HAVE DONE ALONE. I had resigned, but yet must remain in the community; my home was here. I undertook to explain it to Mr. Prudence, but in the midst of it, he said, "I suspect I ought not to know what you are telling me." I told him it was just what he ought to know. But he went out as though he did not know, and continued the fraternity. What the other churches should have done, was to say to Calvary Church, we have had pleasant relations with Mr. Strong and you. Now there is a difficulty between you; settle that difficulty and then we will hold union meetings. Whatever the other ministers meant, they became the right arm of this designing church. One other circumstance contributed to strengthen the church to give their full power to my ministerial destruction. During all the years of my pastorate in Thrift, Mr. Wealthy had given to my support. For several years he had given one dollar a week. But after my pastorate he immediately doubled his subscription for my successor, making it one hundred dollars a year. This

he did in the face of his full knowledge of the case, when he had said many times, "It is all dead wrong," and against my efforts to have him take steps to bring the church to repentance. I told him as things were the church could not run. "O, yes," he said, "they will clean up and go on." I told him that it would take a big washing machine to clean up Deacon Willrule. The strange thing about it is, he gave his money and influence before they cleaned up. There is the rub. They should be made to acknowledge their wrong. He could have held them to that and they would have done it. But so soon as the one hundred dollars was at their disposal and he was in his accustomed place at church, they cared very little whether he endorsed their proceedings or not. But his position was that he was not a member of the church, and consequently had no voice in the matter. Right here, I want to speak a word of public caution. The man who has money and looks on and sees a wrong, and continues his contributions, excusing himself on the ground that he does not belong to the church, is capable of doing an infinite amount of harm; and frequently does it. This Mr.

Wealthy did, when he knew, if the work went on in that way, it was over my prostrate form. To say nothing of his professed friendship and cordiality to me, how could he do that with any expectation of good being done until they had made their acknowledgments to me, to God and the community. The church need not wonder long why worldly men hold back from the church when they are eye-witnesses of such outlandish conduct. Add to all these influences, that an indifferent public are careless about these things, on the ground that what is everybody's business is nobody's business, the schemers and the evil plotters come pretty near having their own way, which we are convinced is not the right way. This conduct of Mr. Wealthy has been censured by many who were witnesses of the proceedings. Mr. Webster, not a member of the church, who had become a liberal supporter of the church up to that time, declared unhesitatingly that Mr. Wealthy had done very wrong. Mr. Webster absolutely refused to have anything more to do with the church, declaring its conduct to be deficient in every principle of honor, justice and truth. In a few weeks the church

had called Rev. Mr. Sharer to become their pastor. In him they found a man of their own type. He seconded their doings, not recognizing me or my friends as having any rights that they were bound to respect. But notwithstanding the foregoing conditions, the other churches and ministers assembled at the Calvary Church and gave Mr. Sharer a reception, and he was publicly announced as the representative of proceedings which were anything but brotherly. The winter months were coming. All recognized, and no wonder, that there was great need of a religious revival. The three churches and ministers met in consultation and they unanimously agreed to call an Evangelist for union revival services. Now, mark a strange circumstance. It was important who this Evangelist was to be. But at the conclusion of their deliberations, it was decided to take Mr. Sharer's recommendation and call Mr. Crandall. Think for a moment, wanted! a man to bring men to God! let the man who is sanctioning the conduct of an unholy church select that man because he knows him. But so it was. The Evangelist was engaged, the time was set, the meetings were

to be held in the First Church. The preparation was elaborate. A large amount of money was raised, probably more than one thousand dollars, and there were preparatory house-to-house prayer meetings and the preaching was in reference to a preparation for such a series of meetings. As the time approached, I became uneasy and ere we knew it, Margaret and myself were living the awful experiences all over again. I determined to leave the town during the meetings. I sent word to a friend that I would like to come and spend two or three weeks with him. I knew that I would be welcome there, but his wife sent word that he was just recovering from the grippe and could I wait a few weeks. I made other efforts to get away, but could not. Just about the time the meetings were to commence, Rev. Mr. Prudence met me and wanted to know if I was not going to attend the meetings. I told him, "No! I could not in conscience do so, as the Calvary Church was in it and I had not a particle of confidence in its leaders." A few days after the meetings commenced, Rev. Mr. Prudence came to my house and asked me to go down to the Bible readings in the afternoon,

as I would be unobserved. I told him that I had preached in this town ten years and did not propose to go into any side door. When I came, it would be with full ministerial recognition. The meetings took on much public interest. One night Deacon Willrule made a motion that two mottoes be placed across the principal streets, in plain view of the railroad cars: "THRIFT FOR CHRIST." It was done. The Evangelist assailed the First Church for dancing and card playing, saloon keepers and other offenders received his rebuke, but not a word was said about the Calvary Church wrong. When Mr. Prudence called on me, I called his attention to the fact that the Evangelist and his helper were gratuitously entertained at Deacon Willrule's. I asked him if he supposed that Deacon Willrule did that for Christ's sake. I told him No, but it was a plan to cover his wickedness and plow me under. How was it that the Evangelist knew how to assail Thrift evils and yet did not discover Calvary's great wrong, which was the theme of universal talk. Still I concluded to abide in silence and let the work shape as it would. I spent nearly all my time

at home and was curious to know what shape I would be in when the meetings were over. The time seemed long, but my nerve held out, and I expected to find myself somewhere as the days rolled on. Evangelist Crandall was quite a general. He would stop when his sermon was half preached and say this will be finished in the street, and then leading the way out would take his place on a conspicuous street corner and the congregation would follow him. He would institute prayer meetings at all times of the day and night. The saloons were out of business. Public interest was intense. All this I could observe, but I knew there was an Achan in the camp. The Evangelist found this himself. When he went about urging sinners to be saved, old and young would say, have the Calvary Church do justice to Mr. Strong, then we will believe in your religion, but until then we are better than your professed Christians. And they were right. Neither he nor Mr. Sharer had called on me. I determined to let it work its way and keep quiet. But my plans were frustrated. On the Friday night before the meetings closed, about nine o'clock, as I was in

my study alone, my door bell rang. A young man with five or six young ladies stood at the door. He was spokesman. "We have called to ask you and Mrs. Strong to come down to the First Church to a nine fifteen prayer meeting." He said, "The Lord is working wonderfully and everybody was praying, CHRISTIAN PEOPLE," with a peculiar inflection on the Christian to show me that I was a failure in my duty. I told him that Mrs. Strong was not at home and I did not feel well enough to come. "It's too bad," he said, "Pray for us." I said "Yes," and one of the young ladies said "Yes," and they went their way.

Your persecuted son,

STEPHEN STRONG.

SEVENTH LETTER.

MY DEAR, DEAR MOTHER:—

You will readily see how I must have felt. To be approached by inexperienced people, with the assumption of my failure in duty, when I was conscious that I was standing on the solid rock of integrity and truth. Yet I knew this was a fresh attack upon me, and unless something was done, their religious scheme had carried and I was plowed under. I was home alone that night. Immediately I felt a sense of oppression; my heart beat heavily; there was no sleep for me that night. All the detested scenes of the miserable affair were going through my mind. I determined to write to the young man and state the matter plainly, although I knew he was perfectly familiar with the circumstances without any letter. At the time the abuse first began he was not here, he came to the town as a member of another church, but his professed interest

in me and other reasons, held him to Calvary Church. He was in our home frequently during our great sorrow and knew all about it. But never once expressed sympathy with us. Humanity would call for pity if a cat were in torture, but this model young man in the exercise of his Christian virtue could look complacently upon our suffering without one word of sorrow or regret for the terrible ordeal through which we were passing. I could see that this new call for prayer would be interpreted against me before the public. I was not mistaken in it. For it was noised about that such a call had been made upon me accompanied by some such words as the following, "These are not Calvary meetings, if Mr. Strong was a Christian he would be in the meetings." I therefore wrote the letter which follows, taking the precaution to make it an open letter and publish it if necessary.

AN OPEN LETTER.

THRIFT, March 18, 1905.

DEAR BROTHER PITYLESS:—

Last night you called on me, inviting me to

the meetings with Mrs. Strong. I told you Mrs. Strong was away and I did not feel well enough to go. Both of which were true. But it does not say all. Mrs. Strong and myself have been injured and harmed beyond expression by the course the Calvary Church took with us last summer and the months preceding. Every one knows, and God knows, that I had planned everything that was good for the Calvary Church and Thrift, and brought things to pass until marvels were wrought in our midst. It was due me to pass me on with honor and praise, instead of which I received criticism and humiliation. As they have now left me, my ministerial influence is almost paralyzed. And all this without any fault of mine or Mrs. Strong. Now all this has been done in the sight of this community and it has been so flagrant that the profound sympathy of the people is with us. Placing it short, the Calvary Church has failed to appreciate our hard work and unparalleled success, have withheld the little amount that Mrs. Strong asks for her services, four hundred and seventy-eight dollars and twenty-five cents, and which in all honor should be paid with interest, have

robbed me of my ministerial standing and what seems strange to us, does not seem to care how bad we feel. The conduct of the church has made us prisoners in our own house. Under all these circumstances, it does not meet the case for a self-appointed committee to come to my door and invite me. I do not question the sincerity of the committee. I do not know who they were, with the exception of yourself. I take the position that Paul did in Acts 16:35 to 40. Speaking for Mrs. Strong and myself, they have beaten us openly and uncondemned, being ardent Christian workers, and cast us into prison. And so my full answer to your committee is this, AFTER ALL THIS does the church think to thrust us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out. That is, let them pay Mrs. Strong. Let them give me credit for the great work I have done in this midst. Let them speak words in such form and place as will restore me my ministerial standing. Again, I have never been officially asked, as a minister, to join in the meetings."

STEPHEN STRONG.

It was my intention to publish this in the village papers. But on reflection I thought it might be interpreted as my attempt to destroy the good the meetings had done and I concluded to send it to the Evangelist and let him use it for the good of the work. To do this would call for a letter of explanation to him. The following is the letter:

THRIFT, March 19, 1905.

DEAR BROTHER CRANDALL:—

On Friday evening I was visited by a committee and invited to come to a nine o'clock prayer meeting. I could not go. I have given my reason to them, a copy of which I enclose to you. All of which is true and more, too. The new Calvary Church is the product of my effort and the sudden strength which they seem to show is the result of my careful leadership. My standing in the town is unquestioned. It could not be otherwise but that my wife and myself should feel crushed under the usage we have received. I did not believe it was possible for human beings to pass through what we have for the past two years. There are not two other people in the town that would have lived through it and kept their rea-

son. The community knows what we have done; they know how we have been used. My letter to the committee indicates to you what way is now open to rectify, as far as possible, the great wrong that has been done me and mine. No one wants your motto across the street to prove true more than I do. "THRIFT FOR CHRIST." If it does, I shall have justice; the world will know that I stand high and above every attack that has been made upon me. The base lie of my poor preaching will be rectified and the world will look on and say that there is power enough in God to bring wickedness in the church to an account, and as far as possible rectify so evident a wrong as has been done me. Then the spirit of the Lord will have free course in this town and be glorified. You now have the power to make the master stroke in your Thrift campaign.

Your afflicted and injured Brother, in the Garden with Christ,

STEPHEN STRONG.

Pastor of the Calvary Church for the past ten years.

P. S. I shall be glad to have a call from

you and talk the matter over. I shall retain a copy of this and reserve the right to make it public if I choose.

S. S.

These two letters were placed in the Evangelist's hands on Monday evening. Tuesday noon he had not called on me. I went to Mr. Fairman's; he assured me that the Evangelist would call and then gave me the experience of the hour before. Mr. Crandall and Mr. Sharer had called at his home, ostensibly to procure a subscription for the Y. M. C. A. Building which was to be the great climax of the meetings. They were not successful. Mrs. Fairman told them nothing would be done by them until Mrs. Strong was paid. She also said, "I suppose you want to pray for my husband, but don't have Deacon Slyman pray for him, for he has no confidence in his religion." She also said, "I suppose you want him to go to the meetings, but he says he will not go there and see that hypocrite, Deacon Willrule, strutting about." Mr. Sharer said he could not get acquainted with Mr. Fairman. She said, "I will tell you why, Mr. Fairman does not wish to see you. You have not come to this town right. You ought to be the foremost in having

this affair of Mr. Strong settled. You would have had no new church without him. And Mr. Fairman has the public good at heart, so that if you are to come here to work, he wants you to come with some prospect of success. As you are now doing, you cannot succeed." They left the house, met Mr. Fairman in the street. Mr. Fairman said to the Evangelist, "I beg and entreat of you that you do not leave this town until you have straightened this matter of Mr. Strong. You can do it if you choose, and unless you do, your coming to this town will be a curse. You need not tell me what Mr. Strong has done. I was President of the Board of Trustees of the church all the time he was here; was on the building committee. Many times he talked with me about the enlargement. I let him talk, but I had no expectation of his doing it, there was no money in sight for the work. BUT HE DID DO IT and raised every dollar for it, and then, after he had done this impossible thing, the very first step the church took was to lock him out doors with no cause. I tell you, this community won't stand it. Tell the church to proceed at once and get Mrs.

Strong's money as being the least thing they can do after they have done the abominable work they have. But if they don't do it, there will be a donation for Mr. Strong and there will be more money than that in it and I know it." After his telling me this, I returned home awaiting the coming of the Evangelist. About five P. M. he came, said he had prayed all night over it. He appreciated my situation and would make his best endeavor to right the wrong. About seven-thirty P. M., Rev. Mr. Prudence and a Grace Church layman called at my house and asked if Mrs. Strong and myself would go to Mr. Fairman's to a prayer meeting; we went. On reaching there, we found a company of about twenty joining hands and singing. We joined the circle. Deacon Willrule stepped to me, extending his hand, saying, "I regret these differences and wish they might be rectified." I assured him that no one wanted them rectified more than I. Then Mrs. Willrule shook hands and wanted to know if everything was going to be just as it was. I told her, that would depend, it had all been useless and cruel. Then Mrs. Strong hesitating to take Mr. Willrule's

hand was asked if she could not trust and then said, "YES, IF JUSTICE IS DONE MR. STRONG." She shook hands with both, using these words. Then we prayed. Then Mr. Prudence turned to me and said, "Now, Mr. and Mrs. Willrule have shaken hands with you and Mrs. Strong, can't you shake hands with them?" I said, "It will not cost me anything to shake hands with them, I am not mad, I am crushed; I am the victim. But I can't see any particular good in shaking hands with them, as there were others than them in it and there has been no time for a church meeting." Mr. Willrule then said, "I have not been appointed by the church to do this, but I know I voice the sentiment of the church when I say they want this settled." Just then a voice was heard, "And we know if the church will take up Mrs. Strong's claim, the community will help them get it." I then said, "If this is a call from the church for a settlement, of course I shake hands." Mrs. Strong shook hands and the meeting closed, having committed the church to do justice by Mr. Strong and that Mrs. Strong should be paid. It was then proposed that we all walk

down to the church, some suggesting that Mr. Willrule walk with me and Mrs. Willrule with Mrs. Strong. I said, "No, I will walk with my wife." We reached the church. It was proposed again to walk up the aisle with Mr. Willrule, but I walked with my wife. As I told her, we had walked the road side by side through the dire affair and we would continue to the end. As we entered the church in procession, a sister led us down the aisle singing, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." It was a large congregation of six or seven hundred. No sooner did they see Mrs. Strong and myself followed by Mr. and Mrs. Willrule and others, than the whole congregation arose and every handkerchief was waving; we had a true Chautauqua salute, lasting a long time. All were in tears. The enthusiasm was intense, wave after wave of sympathy passed through our hearts as we walked to the platform. As I reached the steps, Judge Church extended his hand and said, "Come up here, you dear man, you're all right. I thought if we prayed long enough, we would plow down in there somewhere." Then he said the same to Mrs. Strong and we were enthusiastically received.

as we faced the audience in the midst of the Chautauqua salute which they seemed in no hurry to discontinue. It was a scene long to be remembered. We prayed. The Evangelist came to me as I sat down and said, "This is the intensest day of my ministry." He then told me how he had sent the party up to Mr. Fairman's. He said, in the fore part of the evening he went through the audience four times speaking with this one and that one, saying, "Go back into the prayer room and go to praying," until he had about twenty. The most of these came to the meeting at Mr. Fairman's. So confident was Mr. Crandall that the matter was settled, that he placed me on the program the next day as one of the speakers, which appointment I kept. On Wednesday as we left the church, Judge Church took us by the arm, saying, "I have had occasion to say a good many words for you and I am going to say more." He said, "Last night Mr. Crandall came into the meeting at the church with the twenty and said, "I want you to take hold of Mr. Strong's trouble and pray until it is settled just as God wants it." They did pray. Then Deacon Willrule arose and said, "No

one regretted this matter more than he, but it could not be helped." This was more than the Judge could stand and he arose, saying, "I happen to know something about this matter myself. I gave three hundred dollars toward that enterprise when no one would have said that I ought to have given over fifty dollars, if I gave anything. I am a First Church member and support my own church. But I gave the above amount to help Mr. Strong, and this town is full of just such men. I tell you it is the cruelest thing I ever heard of and I wish the brick would fall down on you." Then Deacon Willrule said, he was willing to do anything. The Evangelist replied, "Then take your wife and go up to Mr. Fairman's." That is how that meeting was brought about. At the church as the meeting closed, we had an ovation; probably shaking hands with more than three hundred. Even the Calvary people came with expressions of greeting and we hoped God had taken it into His own hands. Mrs. Strong and myself agreed on the way home, if the church fulfilled on their part, we would attend church there, for, if they desired us to forgive them

the wrong, we would forgive them. We wanted very much to have it so. But in this we were to be disappointed. I spoke to Mr. Sharer for the first time in the First Church. Once after that he shook hands with me, but he did not say, "We shall expect you in church next Sunday and shall be glad to have you with us." Of course we were waiting for the church to make good Deacon Willrule's pledge. But we did not hear from them. On inquiry I learned that the Evangelist had not placed the letters in Mr. Willrule's hands, although there was nothing in them that he did not know. However, as they did not come to me, I went to his house, called on his wife, read the letters to her and she said, "There was nothing in them but that the church ought to do." She said she would tell Mr. Willrule and have the matter promptly attended to. As I heard nothing for a day or two, I concluded to write a letter to Mr. Willrule, which I will now give.

THRIFT, March 25, 1905.

DEACON WILLRULE.

DEAR BROTHER:—

It seems that Brother Crandall did not show

you the letter I wrote to him. I supposed he had. I will enclose it to you just as I sent it to him. Mrs. Strong and I supposed you had seen them when we were at Mr. Fairman's and when we went down to the church. God —this community—my own reputation—the Calvary Church—demand that this matter should not at this time be covered up. I have thought that the church could meet and pass resolutions that would set the matter just as near right as it can now be made. It is time strong words of appreciation were spoken for me as to my success and my ability to preach. So don't be afraid to use the adjectives. I will indicate to you something of what the resolutions may be.

Whereas, a grievous wrong was done our late pastor, Rev. Stephen Strong, Ph.D., in the manner in which he was led to resign from his pastorate;

And whereas, it has caused great sorrow to Dr. and Mrs. Strong; the community; and the church itself;

And whereas, we desire to remove all obstacles from the progress of God's cause;

Therefore be it resolved,

1st—That we are under lasting obligations to him for obtaining for us our beautiful church by his unceasing and successful efforts.

2nd—That we do hereby express our confidence in him as a Christian gentleman, and an able preacher of the word and do most cordially endorse and recommend him to any church to which he may be called as a man who brings things to pass.

3rd—That the trustees give a note of five hundred dollars to pay Mrs. Strong for her able service in playing the organ and developing the music for the past nine years and more.

4th—That a copy of these resolutions be published in the Thrift papers, the *City Herald* and the *Metropolitan Official Paper*.

STEVEN STRONG.

This focused the matter, and placed it where it was within easy reach of us all. If there was any fault in my proposition at all, it was that it did not hold the evil doers to come forward and publicly confess their great wrong personally, each one speaking for himself. There was nothing asked they were not perfectly able to do. So, of course, I confidently

expected a prompt answer; and as they had succeeded in carrying their point and had put me out of the pastorate; reason—decency—hope of future success—fairness and justice to me—everything said they will not fail here, so that I can announce to man and God that I stand high and above every attack that has been made upon me. But I was to be disappointed again. Days which seemed years went by, still no kindly call. How fitting it would have been if the committee, which had so meanly come to my house and asked me to resign, had now come and expressed their sorrow for their doings, with a solemn promise that they would never be guilty of so cruel a thing again. But nothing of the kind was done, and I was to have another chapter of evil opened upon me, as you will see in the following letter.

Your sorrowful son,

STEPHEN STRONG.

EIGHTH LETTER.

DEAR MOTHER:—

In order to make the case perfectly clear to you, so that you can fully understand, I will copy in full what I subsequently published in the village paper. It may seem to anticipate the story, but I think no one can misunderstand. The following is the newspaper publication:

DR. STRONG'S CASE.

STATEMENT CONCERNING HIS RELATIONS
WITH THE THRIFT CALVARY
CHURCH.

It is due the citizens of this town as well as myself that my attitude towards the Calvary Church of this place be made public. Myself and wife have suffered great injustice at their hands. For the great work I have done in

this place they owed me honor and praise—they gave me criticism and humiliation. We have endured this form of injustice as best we could and God has kept us unto this day. At the revival meetings I intimated to them what way was open to make the matter just as near right as it could then be made. They were to speak words in such form and place as would restore me my ministerial standing—they were to pay Mrs. Strong for her services for the past 9 years and more. To the end of such a reconciliation a prayer meeting was called at the home of Mr. Fairman about March 20th, 1905. In the midst of prayer, pledges were made, in behalf of the Calvary church that "Justice was to be done Mr. Strong and Mrs. Strong was to be paid for her services." After which Mrs. Strong and myself were conducted to the First Church, where we received such an enthusiastic reception from the congregation, that we shall never cease to be thankful for it to our dying day. We then were looking for the church to make good the pledges made until April 14, when we received a communication from the church asking us to arbitrate the matter, I

will now give the correspondence which passed between us and the church in order that the public may judge of our fairness from first to last.

THRIFT, May 24, 1905.

To the Thrift Calvary Church:—

Replying to yours of May 19 would say. It is not my purpose at this time to review the conduct of the church towards Mrs. Strong and myself during the summer of 1904, and the months preceding. About March 20th, 1905, under the solemn influence of prayer, at the home of Mr. Fairman a solemn pledge was made in the presence of witnesses, That "Justice was to be done to Mr. Strong" and Mrs. Strong was to be paid for her services. This was sealed by mutual hand-shaking and at the suggestion of the meeting Mrs. Strong and I "trusted" the church for the fulfillment. We and the community had every reason to believe that this was final and would certainly be carried out. We were continuously looking for its fulfillment until April 14, 1905, when we received a communication from the church asking us to arbitrate—we to choose one member—the church to choose one—and the two

to choose the third. To which we made the following reply. "We are in receipt of your communication of April 14th, 1905, suggesting that the conduct of the church towards us be submitted to a committee of arbitration. In reply thereto would say, that, while we feel that the church should voluntarily and without arbitration, do all in its power to right the great wrong that has been done us, by passing resolutions of commendation and appreciation, and by paying Mrs. Strong for her services as organist, yet in order that we may not seem to be unfair and unwilling to do what is right we consent to the suggestion made and will name the member of the committee to be chosen by us as soon as you have named yours, and we would respectfully request that the proceedings be brought to as speedy a determination as possible. I immediately went to Hanover, called upon Rev. John Hubbard, D.D., submitting to him your paper, and asking him in the light of conditions imposed, if he was qualified to act on the commission. He said he had neither formed nor expressed a biased opinion, and in his characteristic, conscientious way said he con-

sidered himself in no sense disqualified to act on the committee. On May 2nd I received a communication from the church notifying me that the church had chosen Rev. Mr. Sprague, D.D., of the Hanover First Church as their member. I immediately communicated with Dr. Hubbard and asked him to serve on the committee and received the reply that he accepted the position. After which communication I notified the church that I had appointed Dr. Hubbard as our member of the committee. On May 5th we received the following from the church: "Yours of the 4th at hand. In reply would say, inasmuch as Dr. Hubbard is your pastor, thereby making him an interested party which is contrary to the agreement the church refuses to accept him as one of the committee." I immediately went to Hanover to consult my counsel in the case and found him to be in New York to remain several days. I called on Dr. Hubbard and submitted to him your objections, and in view of the fact that he assured me that his position in regard to the issues was that of a neutral, and since further I had joined his church merely to maintain a proper denominational standing—I

considered your objection technical and asked him to remain on the committee. I then awaited my counsel's return from New York, which was Saturday, May 20th, at which time I purposed to see him and fully arrange the matter. On May 19th, I received the following from the church: "We are just informed by Dr. Sprague that Dr. Hubbard and himself have agreed upon a third party and have appointed a time and place for the commission to meet. In this connection desire to call your attention to the first clause of your signed agreement that three disinterested persons be chosen, etc. Dr. Hubbard, is according to our information, your pastor, and therefore cannot be termed a disinterested person. We notified you May 5th of our refusal to accept him solely on this ground. Unless you can name a disinterested person and so notify us on or before May 25th, we shall withdraw our offer of arbitration, inform Dr. Sprague of our action and declare ourselves on account of your failure to comply with your written agreement free from any and all responsibility in the entire matter." In reply to which I now declare, I have complied with my written

agreement in both letter and spirit, and in Dr. Hubbard have appointed a man second to none in the State qualified to act on the case, and the church would have made no mistake in appointing him their arbitrator, as he belongs to that high order of Christian gentlemen which would render it impossible for him to be bought, influenced or coerced to render a verdict contrary to the facts submitted. I therefore deny your charge that I have in any sense chosen an interested party and lay it back upon you that you have transcended the terms of your agreement when you object to Dr. Hubbard. In this refusal you reflect on Dr. Hubbard's integrity and should I consent to it, I should be a party to the affront. I therefore call your attention to the fact that I reluctantly consented to the arbitration in order that I might not seem unfair. Because I felt and knew it was not a case for arbitration, but simply for the church to fulfill a solemn promise made in its behalf and do what they had agreed to do. In conclusion we would say:

1st. The proposition to arbitrate was submitted by the church with certain definite

specifications and was accepted and officially agreed to by both parties.

2nd. It is a simple principle alike in law and morals that an agreement once made cannot be either cancelled, amended in any particular, or limited by either party thereto without the consent of the other party. You will see therefore that your declaration, to the effect, that, on the conditions named by you, the agreement to arbitrate will be void after May 25th is wholly unwarranted and is without force and effect.

3rd. In view therefore of the facts and circumstances, and in view of the fact that we are the aggrieved parties in this distressing affair, we do not insist upon the arbitration, but simply leave you without compulsion, save the compulsion of a Christian spirit and Christian morality to carry out and make good the plain and definite promises and assurances so solemnly made to us in the prayer meting at Mr. Fairman's home on March last. We ask nothing more, we are entitled to expect nothing less from the members of the church of Jesus Christ.

STEPHEN STRONG,
MARGARET STRONG.

To this we received the following communication:

THRIFT, N. Y., May 26, 1905.
REV. AND MRS. STEPHEN STRONG,

City,

DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER:—Your letter of the 24th inst. was duly received and carefully noted.

Replying will say that as we fail to agree with you on the points stated and as you have annulled our mutual agreement of April 14th, 1905, by failing or refusing to appoint a disinterested party to be your representative in accordance with its terms, we consider said agreement to be cancelled by your failure and therefore no longer binding on us, and will so notify Dr. Sprague.

Regretting that you have allowed this opportunity to pass by, we beg to remain,

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the Calvary Church,
JOHN LITTLEMAN, Clerk.

It must be evident to all that Mrs. Strong and I did not annul the arbitration agreement. We simply waived our right of arbitration provided by the agreement. But this

in no conceivable sense released the church from the obligation to keep literally and fully the solemn promise made. If it were true that our waive cancelled the agreement their promise still remains in full force.

It is a question of fair dealing in the church of God. Does God appoint his church to tear down those who give their fullest power to build it up? The letter of C. H. Parmalee in last week's paper gives the gist of the matter. As surely as God is God he must withhold his blessing from such a people. How can the church expect the favor and blessing of God unless they deal justly and love mercy?

As to Mrs. Strong's bill, Mrs. Strong did not present her bill in the spirit of revenge. She felt after we had received criticism and humiliation instead of words of merited praise and recommendation, thus destroying our prospects for another pastorate we could not afford to give all her service. Under the circumstances she felt justified.

STEPHEN STRONG.

Dear Mother, I am sure from the above paper you will gather the full meaning of the position. The fact that the church wanted to

arbitrate was an admision on their part that there was an issue, and comes the nearest to any acknowledgment of wrong on their part of anything they ever did. A layman from the same denomination of a neighboring town said to me, "Do they have to arbitrate to be decent?" It is strange that they should be so obstinate and unwilling to make amends. So far as worldly and financial interests were concerned, not one of them had risked a penny, their own business was moving on, bread was coming regularly to their homes, but, as for me, I was cut off from employment, being morally assured that no other church would want me when such a cloud was left to hang over my ministerial work. Even a child can see that they placed themselves among the list of persecutors without the least possible advantage to themselves. True, they may say, and I am told they do say, that they were driven to it by the impossibility of running the church under my leadership. But I know, and they know, and God knows that when they say it they utter a falsehood. But if that were true, why not come around now and help me out? Pity itself would say, it has gone far

enough, take them off the rack. But no! it would spoil their enjoyment; these Neros would miss the pleasures of the spectacular crucifixion. In the account of the intercommunication, I referred to the article of Rev. Mr. Parmalee of Jamesville published in the paper of the week before. I will now give the article:

DISCREDITABLE PROCEDURE.

In the light of Bible teaching, it is not a matter of wonder that many a church, claiming to represent the principles and spirit of Christianity, should frequently be in a low spiritual condition, for the leading members have pursued ways which have provoked the Lord to anger against them. And in such instances the innocent members suffer with the guilty ones. It was always so. I now have in mind a church. For ten years, recently closed, it was served by a pastor of talent, a genuine Christian, and who in various ways worked hard to promote the spiritual life and material welfare of the church. His wife was of large assistance to him in church work during all of

these years. She was organist of the church and did a vast deal in making the praise service a powerful aid to the public worship. Both pastor and wife have been most highly regarded by the entire community throughout the pastorate. A year ago very extensive improvements on the church edifice were completed at a cost of \$6,000 and nearly all of the money was obtained by the solicitations of the pastor, and it required many months of assiduous work to secure the means. During the whole pastorate the salary was only \$500 per year, and the pastor had to hire his house. A few months after the edifice was remodeled and greatly improved, the pastor was asked by a committee, appointed by the church, to resign, and he very soon did so. Recently a successor was obtained, at a salary much larger than the former pastor received. The church claimed to be unable to pay their pastor any more than they were giving him. They were contented to let him and his devoted wife economize and deny themselves all of these years. The whole thing is a very discreditable procedure, and I am confident that God will withhold His favor from that

church until they shall repent, and it may be years before they will do so. As a matter of justice to the pastor and wife they should have been permitted to remain in their position a year or two longer. Churches should deal fairly with their best servants.

C. H. PARMALEE.

This article places the whole subject in its true light and is worthy of great consideration by every church in the world. I know what it cost to bring things to the point of success it had attained. The reward I received for it was the usage that could receive no apology unless I was an utter failure in brain, heart, and moral standing. To construe it that the church was to go on to prosperity over my ruin without any amends being made, it would be necessary for me to think it out in this way. In the day of my consecration to God, he said to me, go to Thrift, when you get there you will find a discouraged band doing little or nothing and accomplishing less, with no standing in the community, go and build it up, baptize over one hundred, beautify the church edifice until it is the most attractive church in

the town, get the good opinion of the community, have your wife develop the music until it makes the blood tingle to hear it, and when you have done all this, I will have the very people for whom you have accomplished it—MY PEOPLE—break both your hearts—persecute you in public and in private and will have them staunchly maintain their position, while they are looking for the time to come when our voices will be hushed and we shall be where no word of ours can disturb their hypocritical services. And as the Sabbaths come, Margaret and I must look on and see them supported by the affiliations of Grace Church and First Church, and pose as the disciples of Jesus Christ. Or, as it is supposed that every Christian should attend some church, we are to join in with the company and worship a God who gives his approval to such conduct. You see, Dear Mother, it is utterly impossible for me to accept any such position. I readily confess, if I must, if I am compelled to do so, and must be persuaded that such is God's will, then I am an infidel—before I shall worship such a God as that, I will join the ranks of the open infidels. One or two things

is true. Either God blesses, or he condemns it. The God of the Bible, the God I worship, can do no other thing than condemn it. I am, therefore, ruled to be upon the side of God and with His support can look on serenely and see the storms gathering that are to sweep away those who are thus incorrigible. This is what I would avert. Better that the guilty ones should come to repentance, than that they should pass on and be punished. Right here comes the problem. I am told that a similar state of things is quite common throughout the land. If that be so, is it strange that spiritual weakness is the characteristic element in all attempts to make inroads upon the people of the world. The outside looks on and says, that is religion—justice is not to be found in the church—I am better than professed Christians. Now what is the remedy for all this? The day is gone by when we are to say, cover it up and cover it in, and let Zion appear to be fair in strength, because already the world knows these things too well. If we expect God's blessing and the church is to become what we expect it to be, there is but one way open; and that is, repentance, contri-

tion, confession, amends to the injured ones, abandonment of such unholy practises, in fact, let human hands let go and let God's hands lead on henceforth and forever. Not to do this is to make the church an organization for making infidels rather than Christians. And mark this! unless it is done, we are near the time of the greatest apostasy the world has ever known. I am not now discussing this on the principle of any scriptural interpretation of the nearness or remoteness of the judgment day; but simply to show the situation, and hope that SEEING, men will avoid the fearful consequence that must otherwise come upon them. But the treatment I am receiving and the apparent churchly trend would not indicate that we are very near any reform. Only a few weeks after receiving their ultimatum, I was called to a church as a candidate. While there, my wife forwarded to me a "white cap" clipping from a Sunday newspaper. The article, when applied to those who deserved it, was well enough. It simply said, that when men had been rightly thrust out of churches for incompetency and failure there ought to be a law to compel them to leave the

town, as they were a constant nuisance and were worthy of no consideration. The difference between my case and the one intended was, that I was not that failure in any sense. The ones to leave town are the persecutors and not the persecuted. Think of such a marked article coming to my home when I was absent trying to get a call. Of course, I felt uneasy, for I knew Margaret was home bearing this new insult without my presence. After preaching two Sabbaths I was asked if I was in sympathy with the Thrift Church, I answered "No, and the church would have it to answer for." Up to that time I was confident I would receive a call, but I came home and heard no more from them. Now suppose that when I was asked that question, I could have taken the resolutions I wanted signed, and handed to the committee. I would have had the call; removed from the town and they would have been freed from their nuisance, but that would not do; I must needs be ground between these millstones: First, they would not recommend me to another church, thus enabling me to get away, and yet, I am a bad man because without an income I

know of no better thing to do than to live in my own house. If such is God's method of ridding the church of ministers, better place muskets in the members' hands and bid them shoot them down.

Your son,

STEPHEN STRONG.

NINTH LETTER.

DEAR MOTHER:—

I still have a desire to let you know how I have been getting along from the summer of 1905 until now. I am still living in my home and from present indications shall continue to do so. It would be impossible to describe to you the heartaches we have suffered and do suffer. On account of the loss of confidence in the church, we immediately severed our relations with it and placed our names in another church out of town. Of course, it would not be worship to attend any service such a church might hold. We cannot well attend the sister churches in town, for very frequently they unite with them in union service. And then, we are uneasy in any church because we are conscious that we are observed and pitied. Pity is good, no one should despise it. But after all, it is a poor substitute for earned honor. One thing that has cut very deep into

our emotion is the sound of the ringing of the church bell—it does not call us to worship. The question is, can there be any true worship here when all parties know that there is a justice due me that is not rendered. It was a long time before any of the churches asked me to preach in their pulpits. In 1906 Mr. Prudence asked me to preach for him on the Sabbath of his resignation. I did so, morning and evening. Grace Church have not asked me to preach once. This seems hard, as up to the time of my betrayal by my church, I was acceptable to all of them. Such a condition of things comes pretty near being what we used to call "Gag Law." It places a man where he can get no opportunity to speak. But you might say, get a hall and preach on your own account. That is impracticable in this town. Religious interest is low. The churches have small congregations compared with what they might have and worldly men who look on and call for fair play are not ready to fall down before the Cross, as my preaching would most certainly call for. And besides such unrighteous conduct has disgusted them with any kind of church effort. Individuals by the score

come to me and express their indignation that I should be used as I have. But it is mysteriously strange to me that up to the present hour, either from pen or lips, with the exception of Mr. Parmalee's article, I have not received a public acknowledgment of the work I have done. Individual members of the churches are full of commendation. I often wonder why some one does not say it out in print. Why does not some denominational minister who knows all about my work here put an article in the Religious Weekly, at least telling who I am and what I have done, if he does not offer criticism on the conduct of the church. It therefore seems that I am to work it out alone and it is on this account, Dear Mother, that I am writing these letters to you. Since my betrayal, I have had a great many weddings and frequently attend funerals. But very seldom am I called to preach in any pulpit. When I am asked to preach, I always accept if possible. Some of the old members of my former church cling to me. A sister who was sick a long time frequently said she wanted me to preach her funeral sermon. She wanted it in the church. The husband of the deceased, a

member of the church, came to engage me. I said, certainly I would, but I asked him if another church would not do as well. He said, "No." He then proceeded to ask Deacon Willrule if we could have the church. Deacon Willrule said, the trustees had voted that I should not be allowed to come into the church for any service. But the persistence of the brother procured the church. When we reached the church, it was uncomfortably cold, the snow was not properly removed from the entrance, the choir had refused to sing if I preached and the poor brother was under the necessity of paying an organist and singers from the other churches. Their scheme now seems to be, to hold their services, of any kind, and then come out with a great report of its success, whether it is true or false. They tried this plan with the preacher they called to succeed me. He joined heartily with them in all their wickedness. Were you to judge of their success by the published account of their doings, you would suppose that everything was on the wave of prosperity. Soon it was quietly told that the congregations were very small. But the great doctor was constantly reported

by the press as doing wonderfully. At length, his congregations run out and he resigned, ostensibly to take another position. Whereas the necessity was on him. But after such a signal failure, an article appeared in the Metropolitan Paper giving him credit for all the advance made, and also giving him credit for results that truth does not substantiate. Had they said one-fiftieth part of the amount of good things about me, they did about him, and had to lie to say it; had they said all they could have said about me and told the truth which would have far exceeded the things they said about him, I could have easily obtained another pulpit. In fact, if they had left off their undeserved criticism and given me a civil commendation, I would never have had a heartache. Margaret would have been spared from the torturing rack and if it were best that we should go from Thrift, we would now have been happily employed on some other field suited to our talent. And we could have gone on into eternity without the awful experience that comes from this peril among false brethren. It may be asked, what would I have them do? I would have them sign the reso-

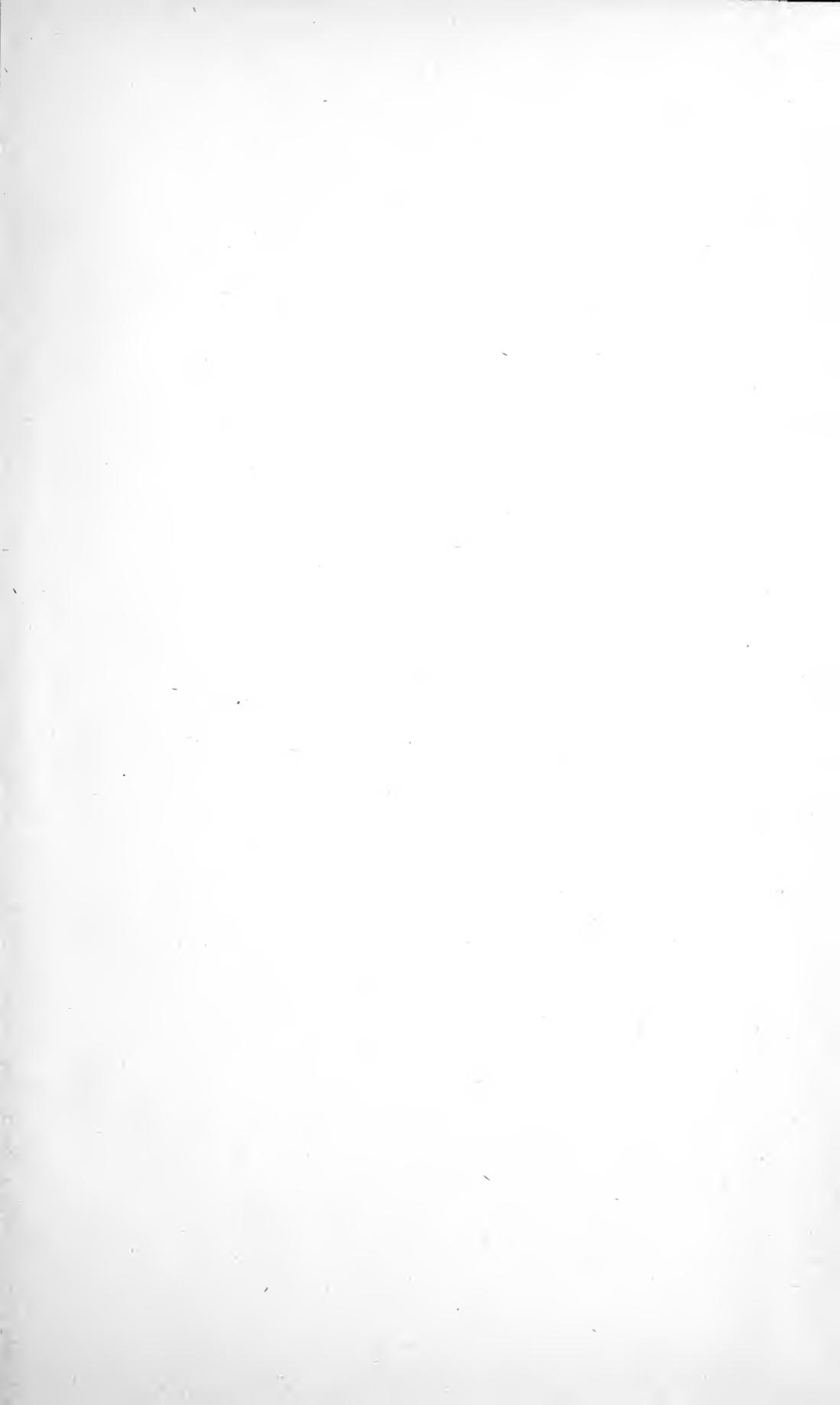
lutions I presented to Deacon Willrule for consideration; and then make them good in every particular, and by such an act solemnly promise to conduct themselves along the line of decency. Or, if they will not do this, I would have them retire from church activity and leave their places to be occupied by men and women upon whom the blessing of God can rest. I say this on the principle that public wrong should always be frowned down. If a minister is detected in a crime and publicly exposed, he is unfrocked, and everybody says it should be so. Even so when a church is guilty of flagrant wrong and are exposed, they should be "unfrocked." There is one way open to all, and that is confession and repentance.

While these things are going on unquestioned, it does not seem so strange that the Church has lost its corrective power, that more people do not attend church, and that young men will not enter the ministry.

Sincerely your son,
STEPHEN STRONG.

FINIS.





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